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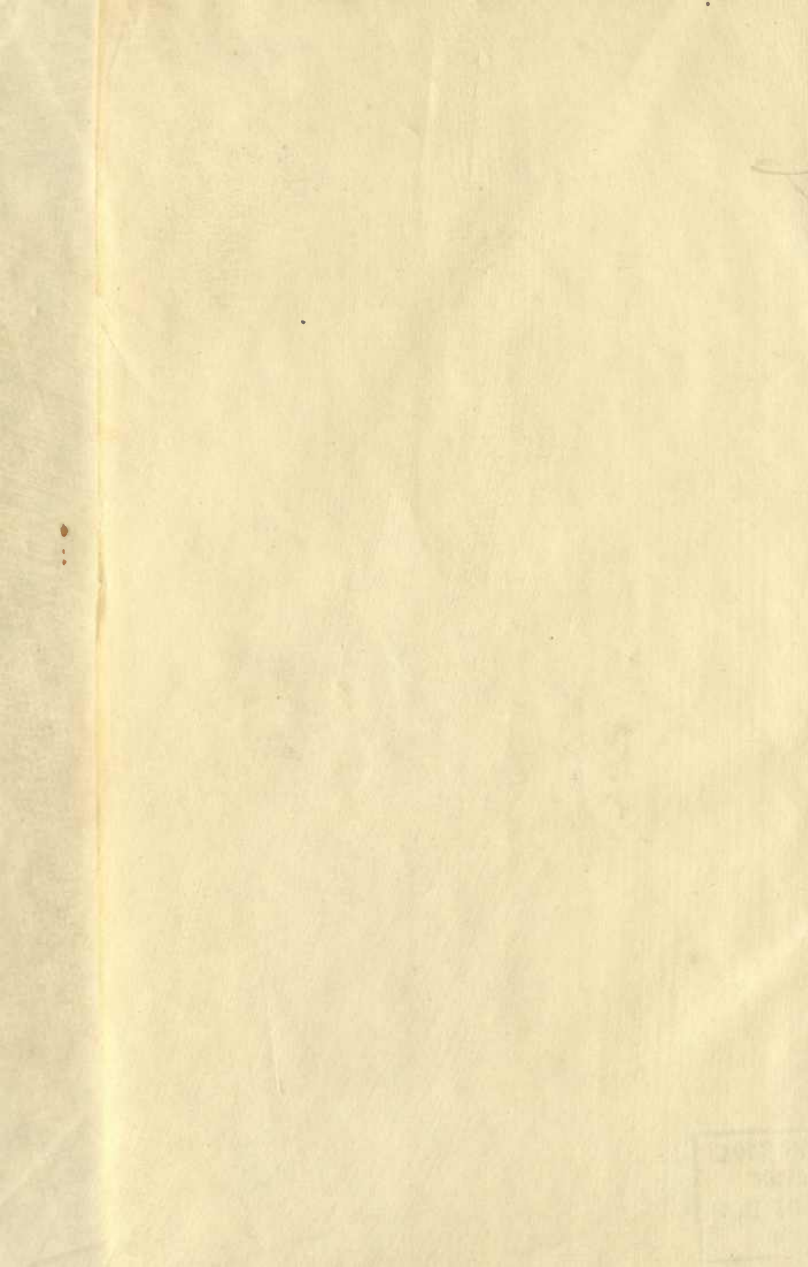


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Nos. 6 to 10.

SKETCHES FROM SIKH HISTORY

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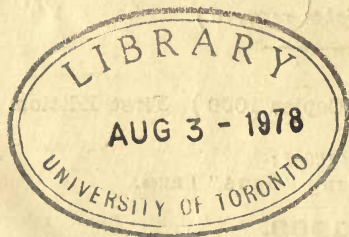
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## INTRODUCTION.

### I.

#### THE CREATION LIES ASLEEP.

More or less, we are all sleeping over our precious life. We are only a degree removed from the so-called inanimate objects. Our best enjoyments are certain irritations of the nervous system. Our time passes away as we lie stupified by the outward pursuits of senses. What we call instinct in birds and beasts is nothing but a thin sprout of Consciousness. What we prize so much and are so proud of—this intellectual faculty of ours—with all its house-making and civilisation-rearing arts, is, after all, a mere developed form of the same instinct whose sole aim is to defend and preserve the nervous system which gives birth to it. The only intellectual art is the art of self-preservation and it is a constant war against our supposed antagonistic environments. Life at best, means to most of us an easy continuation of the act of mere breathing to keep up the animation by a flow of blood. Driven by hunger, like wolves and lions, we labour all the day long to feed ourselves. We fatten our muscles, to be killed again and again with every new sun, in the hard struggles for bare

sustenance. Is it not strange that we live mechanically without knowing the rhyme and reason of our existence? Is not the best of things always lost to us? We are all Adams not fallen from any heaven that is high and above us, but who have lost the Paradise within us. Sit in your high balcony and see the streaming crowds in the street. Do you see any real difference between these huddling millions and those herds of cattle that are so dumb-driven to the pasture fields? Is the diary of human life any different from the deeds of those grazing beasts that earn and earn mouthfuls of grass and then eat and eat, but in that the animals are more well-behaved and free and contented and calm than these crowds of men who are being tossed about in the whirlpool of anxieties, worries and desires of all sorts, amounting in aggregate to nothing more than a wayward lunacy? Deep and beautiful are the words of Wordsworth, words of despair that tell how man with all his refined morality and religion is "out of tune" with Nature :—

" Little we see in Nature that is ours,  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon  
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,



For this, for everything we are out of tune ;  
 It moves us not,—Great God ! I'd rather be,  
 A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses, that would make me less forlorn,"

With all our *boasted* refinements, how gross our appetites and tastes and how dull our susceptibilities ! We drag our burdened life like a horse drawing his heavy cart. In the night, we lie in a death-like swoon, and in the day, though we think ourselves wide-awake, we are in a peculiar species of delirium. We are miserable, as we know our limits. We are poor tools of some one else's thought. We are, with all our "free" will, but helpless mediums hypnotised by our circumstances. We have fixed unnatural boundaries to our heart and mind. We have isolated ourselves from the whole living nature. When we are lying asleep during the night, who knows that the destiny-weaving stars may be at work. Some rays creeping silently and mysteriously over our heads, may be weaving a new design, a new texture and a new fate, in the warp of our mind. There may be truth in the sayings of astrology that influences travel with all the rays that come from the distant stars.

In what an infinitesimal fraction of Life we live and how little is our experience ! But even with this shallow

and delirious life of ours, we have the wonderful pedantry regarding our reason—this little reason of our little life—as final. This pedantry is no-where more astonishing than when we become ridiculous in our acceptance of mere theologies and dogmas and doctrines as true Religion and in our zeal to force them on others as such. We are nothing but ridiculous, when we thus try to reduce the truth to our little incomplete experience. As said above we live but a negligible quantity of the Great Universal Life, the throb of whose pulse beats every-where from the mote that ripples in the beams of light to distant stars and suns. Before we reason out the problems of life, is it not proper, then, that we should live the whole life as it is? Life is a great reason in itself. Is it not more reasonable, therefore, that the real whole life should be *lived* rather than our puny intellect should be let loose in theorising and dogmatising about matters utterly beyond its reach? Only after the knowledge of the life as a whole, the mind has the right to reason and philosophise. The fraction is human, the whole only is divine; and human mind can only be then right when it expands itself and becomes one with the Whole. It is absurd, nay, sinful to reason out the whole in the dim light of the fraction.

Which of us owns the pleasure of seeing the stars in all their wonder-woven beauty and who hears the inaudible and strange accents of their soundless language, in which they whisper to us all our daily thoughts and deeds? The language of life is not made of words, but of mute objects and their motions. Truth has no tongue and yet it speaks. "Word was God and God was word" seems only a symbolical expression in man's language of the real Truth, for God always reveals himself not in symbols that are spoken but in facts that are silent. The language of Truth is the same with the language of life and it is neither sound, nor light, nor word, but the facts and events of life that silently speak. Thus unless we understand the latter aright which we can only do by being in sympathy with Life Universal, we cannot expect to realise Truth. Now is our mind only that much which limits itself in the sensorium, or is it limitless, vibrating everywhere in the night's stars, in the day's sun, in the evening breeze and morning blush, in everything near and far, in every thought and in every feeling? Have we ever the share of the Universal mind? No! For possessing a little we have lost the whole. "Night to us is quite an unexplored region like Africa"—as man has always been under the chloroform of sleep and whenever the raven night with all its splendours beckons him, he reels, staggers and falls senseless on his bed. Just as, from our standpoint, the



lion and the stone with all their activity and motion are equally inanimate with mere shades of differences in their several sleeps, so from a higher stand-point of an awakened Intelligence that is in tune with the Universal mind, all humanity with its multifarious activities is still lying senseless on the night bed of its mental limitations, and all the various walks of human life are but a peculiar phenomenon of somnambulism. The very limitations of the thinking principle in man debar him from knowing the why and whence of his being and with all his outward expansions, he is a stone that has not moved at all. He lives hide-bound by circumstances and conditions as long as his mind is not made unlimited and with all his egotism, he is a poor bird in the cage. His highest development of individual will or the enlargement of the limited will ends in mere disgust, despair and disappointment, just as the abnormal physical development of one's muscles makes for no real strength, no real life, as this in reality deteriorates the quality of his mind, so the abnormal development of will power is a gain in one direction and loss in the other and deteriorates the quality of higher manifestation of spirit in man. His limitations are the only curses that make his free soul a prisoner. His little reason and intellect are a sort of nightmare that press him down under the limitations and the very thing he is proud of is, in reality, the cause of his grovelling bondage. With all his centuries of

desperate attempts and struggles to rise and awake, he finds himself and he will find himself wretched and helpless, as long as limitations are not cast aside and he does not live in his own universal mind.

So it is not the Sunrise that can awaken us. The awakening Light of Spirit is different. Little rays of the Spiritual Light come, when we receive very hard shocks in life, when our dearest feelings are ruthlessly torn apiece, when we receive hard knocks and bumps of disappointments caused by the failure of friendship, love and relationship or the death of those whom we called our own. God awakens us a little by the ruthless hand of death, but we respond only as if moving in a deep sleep. A rude shock of earthquake, a flood, a tempest in sea, the death-bell all shake us up a little, but we sleep again. Thousands of suns are shining and millions of stars are twinkling, yet it is dark. For us the only light is the Law of our being, the ignorance of which steeps the whole creation in a sea of oblivion and dullness.

Grand systems and magnificent structures of Civilisation and Art, like the nests of sparrows, are blown away before the tornado-blast of a single tempest. Where is Egypt with its arts and sciences? Where are Greece and Rome? When we build our empires and our houses, we know not that we are building on the waves of the sea.

Everything in this world of limitations is in continual flux. The empires rise and fall, and the geological changes show that the solid land is in ebb and tide like the liquid ocean. This world of little self as seen through this little mind, is a rapidly moving sea of change and motion. But this *active and roaring* ocean is lying *asleep* in the depths of midnight. The whole creation is wrapped up in spiritual stupor and the time rolls on without any visible effect. It is mental night in which we live and move daily. That sun is not up yet, which would bathe the whole world in the golden sunshine of joy and change these horrid scenes into wonder-woven, enchanted realms of love and beauty.

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## II.

### AWAKENED CONSCIOUSNESS.

The Spirit shines in minds that are made transparent by total self-abnegation. Such ones we call *Brahmjnanis*, the knowers of Self.

Bhagwat Gita declares that the night of the whole creation is the veritable day of the *Brahmjnanis* and that when the whole creation lies asleep, he is wide awake. The ignorant who has not seen that yonder light which shines behind the suns and stars, who has not lived in the Universal Mind, interpretes it in his own way and calls

him a Yogi who snores in the day time and sits up in meditation during the night, when the creation lies asleep and he is wide awake. But Bhagwat Gita points to the day of mind, rather than this Physical day which is a mere symbol of the awakened consciousness. Hence a *Brahmjnani* means an intellect resplendent with the light of the Spiritual Sun, an intelligence shining with the Light of the Universal Mind. Such an Awakened Consciousness is the only true witness of the phenomenal world. It is in sympathy with the Whole. Its verdict is the only true judgment. Its speech symbolises the LAW of LIFE. Its evidence as of the actual witness, the seer, is so definite, conclusive and convincing, that the highest intellects of man have felt compelled to accept it as Truth Divine, saying, "Word was God and God was word." *Brahmjnani* reflects so completely the Light Divine, that he is nothing but Light Divine. Though in reality, his seeming body and mind, like other objects of Nature, serve as a mirror for the higher light, yet this is a mirror so clean and transparent, that there shines the Law, the Truth in all its glory and in the entirety of its manifestation. Hence this saint's greatness is worshipful. Hence he is Christ, Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya. His visions are our loftiest ideals. His sayings are our scriptures. His commandments are the spiritual laws of our being. His signal is the only true direction to march to. It is when



we are fortunate to see the flash of such true beings that we catch glimpses of our real day of life, of our actual state, the real consciousness. There is yet a dawn to break. There is a sun behind our sun. This dawn that brings new life to every object—there the fresh lotus springing on the blue navel of waters, the birds singing and hopping in the bushes, that man-farmer going with his oxen and plough to his field, that maiden smiling at the red sun, that Hindu bathing in a river and splashing water at the sun—, all this joy and life of the dawn of day, is a mere metaphor of the real dawn of consciousness, the real sun, the Self of our self, the God of the universe dawning on our intellect as the In dweller of our heart.

✓ The Vedas receive the homage of all the Hindus, and its lore is said to be the direct revelations of God, nay, the words of God. History is full of praises of the sweet and simple life of the ancient Aryans of the Vedic time. It is said, India was, in those days, the land of wisdom, where prosperity and wealth waited as maid servants on her doors. That golden period is the period of the Hindu awakening into the real day. The Vedic *hymns* describe the dawn of Consciousness, the poetry of which is still unsurpassed. Those awakened Hindus wrote the sublime and exquisitely beautiful *Upnishadas*, the native freshness of whose thought causes the highest thoughts

of the somnambule humanly to pale. They have a freshness of scene and fragrance of that spring, still in their words. Those alone understand the beauties of the Vedic literature who see the glimpses of the real day on the horizon of their mind. To him, who is awakened in the light of the day, the Vedas are the rarest books. They are real descriptions of his life and joy. There, far off, in the dim past we see the effulgent dawn in the Aryan Soul. It was only then, that this India was clothed in raiments of beauty and wonder-woven dreams and heavenly visions. The wisest of men must ever bow their heads in homage before the wonderful grandeur of that golden morn when the Soul of Man awoke to the realisation of its real Self.

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### III.

#### THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS.

The rise of nations is but the day of their mind and their fall is the corresponding night. So lands and nations, as the indices of human mind, pass through different seasons of day and night. The history is yet to be written, which would undertake to classify the growth and the prosperity of nations as the result of the dawn of soul in their mind and registering their decay and fall as consequences of the disappearance of the same light.

All the attempts of the Yogi and the Psychologist till now, have not succeeded well enough to free the human mind from the disease of "*anaesthesia*" to whose benumbing effects it seems very sensitive and falls instantaneously an easy prey. Corresponding to day, night is sure to come. To avoid a misunderstanding, let me say here, that there is no change in the Universal Soul. There is no day and night there. But our mind or *Antahkaran* being an object of this world of change, now closes itself and then opens. When it opens its windows, then the Light of Soul shines upon its walls and it is called awakened, but when it shuts its windows and draws upon itself the different screens, it becomes dark. The science of yoga or the concentration of mind aims to make it free from the disease of *anaesthesia* which shuts it from the light divine and makes it limited and miserable, and claims to make it healthy for receiving the Light of Soul in spite of all changes that ceaselessly go on. If this science of mind has not succeeded well in the past, let us hope that it will succeed better in future and would, by enunciating some clear and definite laws of spiritual hygiene, open our mind to the permanent light of the Real day, so that we may enjoy, both as individuals and as nations, the perennial youth and ever remain in the light of the sun that knows no setting.



Not safe and free from the disease of mental anaesthesia, the descendants of the Aryans slowly began to fold up their minds, as soon as it was fully blown, with the necessary consequence that they began to deteriorate. Their empires fell one by one. Their glories took wing one by one. Their character went on dwindling from bad to worse being sapped and undermined by the darkness within. These Hindus, having forgotten their real Soul or God, invited the divine sufferings on their heads. They suffered much and would have become extinct but for the saving virtue inherent in them, that of submission to the guidance of spirits like one whose lives we have undertaken to chronicle in the ensuing pages. This Indian race has not completely tottered down, because now and then it had its guides who propped it up and infused in its veins the Light of the Day. Many wonder how it has survived so many crushing onslaughts and fatal rebuffs of Nature and is still on the surface of the earth, with its marvellous powers yet to be brought out. Apparently, the Moghul invaders had completely trampled under their feet the night-enwrapped descendents of the day-clad ancestors. Tyranny and rapacity reigned supreme, and at times the suffering of the sweet and mild subjects of India were extreme in those days. The sky of the Punjab particularly was overcast with the gloomiest clouds. Life seemed to have fled away from the people. Their hopes

were all gone. Their backbones were broken. Constant sufferings had completely destroyed all manliness. In such pitch darkness the dawn of a new day winged its flight over the land of the five rivers and the darkness made place for a bright dazzling day. "*Miti dhund jag chanan hoyā*"

When Guru Nanak appeared on the scenes the joy returned to the dying and oppressed folks. It was a new sunrise in the Punjab after a long stifling night. Krishna shone in the Mahabharat times, Buddha covered the land in raiments of gold after him, Shankar followed him and awakened the people again. After Shankar we have had the great Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak with his nine successors makes a unique constellation of spiritual lights on the sky of the Punjab that dazzles our sight. These stars shone on the head of the Punjabis and they knew not, for they were asleep, till when they woke up and saw that all their thoughts were the shadows of Guru Nanak's thoughts. They knew not, till, all of a sudden, the whole of the Punjab was roused from its stupor by one single note from Guru Gobind Singh. The Punjabis, who slept and saw themselves as menial wretches, woke up and found themselves the kings and the masters of the situation.

The Punjab forests have the proud privilege of having nestled within their sacred bosom the Khalsa

Republic of Guru Gobind Singh. The seed of knowledge that Guru Nanak had sown, nourished and watered by the life-blood of his eight worthy successors, shot itself out into living flames of light and freedom at the touch of Guru Gobind Singh.

Whenever, the Light of the Soul shines in one's heart and mind, then he truly lives and knows the joys of life, the progress and prosperity he has to boot. Whenever any nation allowed itself the pleasure of basking in the sun of Truth, it rose. To-day's Punjab wears a different colour on its cheeks, from what other provinces of India wear. There is health, freedom, buoyancy, simplicity and innocence in the Punjab, which is all an effect of the rays of Soul that are sparkling on its waters, and are absorbed by its soil and are shining on the minds of its people.

Myriad lights of the sky exercise myriad different influences on all objects in visible and invisible ways. When the sun comes up in the morning with his redolent light, he brings a new wave of life with it which no eye can see, no limb can touch, but which the heart not only feels, but opens itself every morning to receive. The freshness of the morning is quite different from the calmness of the evening, there being a vast difference in the effects of morning and the evening breezes. The season changes every moment and every moment differs in its spiritual

effects on us. Exactly in the same way, with every new sun of spiritual light, different influences are brought to bear upon the half-dead humanity and with their advent different breezes blow like the Messiah's breaths, whose mysterious nature, magnificent redolence, balmy perfume and life-instilling properties, no words can measure, and which cast a spell around us which completely enchants us and opens new vistas of higher and brighter visions of life to us, and whose gentle and invisible kisses we relish more than the very life itself we are so proud to possess and enjoy. Every teacher of the Law and the Truth brings with him a season of his own Consciousness and makes the tribe or nation to whom he belongs rise up and do its duty.

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## IV.

### WHAT IS RELIGION ?

The people have yet not understood the vital nature of that energy which commonly goes by the name of religion in these days. We hear of Muhammadanism and Hinduism and Christianity and Buddhism and others. On the surface it seems, each one of these religions describes a circle and all those who are in that circle having monopolised that religion are known by their specific names. It seems there is no Christianity outside



the pale of the so-called Christians. When one says "I am a Hindu," it means to most of us that he is no Muhammadan and no Christian. As soon as one enters the Buddhist Sangha, the world understands that he is no Christian and no Muhammadan. This is the custom, and a very wrong custom of our head and heart, but it is so. Prophets, with all their truth, have been through this dread custom, buried in the line of a defined circle. Every circle of these different religions thinks that it has really imprisoned the Truth, the Law, the Prophet, the Seer within the borders of its possession. This is as it meets the eye. But there is something more than what meets the eye.

Did not Buddha say "He who follows my law is dear to me?"

And all prophets of Truth, have emphasised the importance of Truth more than their personalities. Muhammad said to the Arabians:—"O ye people of Arabia! The truth that I preach melts rocks and streams flow out of them at its touch and you are so dull as not to care for it." Guru Nanak has actually said so much that he would 'anoint' his forehead with the dust of the feet of those who love the Truth that he preached. Such are the true notes of those who promulgated the Truth and who realised the great Truth of religions. Religions, all religions, do stand for Truth. That Truth is

universal. At different times, in different countries, different prophets realised that Truth, and owing to the very fact of their being different men they gave different names and language to the expression of their realisation. Therefore idle are all attempts to imprison the fragrance of a garden by raising the high walls round it. The law that Buddha preached, the Allah that Muhammad bore witness to, the God that Christ lifted his Consciousness up to, knows no names. Truth is no respecter of persons. Therefore any human being that knows enough, and realises the Truth in his religion, comes up to a level, where names are no barriers to him to share the inner glories of every religion. Be he a Christian, if he really realises the presence of God, he more than comes up to a true Sikh. And be he a Sikh but if he knows not the Truth preached by the Sikh Gurus, but simply follows a dead routine, repeats certain formulæ by lips and lives the letter and not the law of Sikhism, then surely he is no nearer to the Gurus than an illiterate sweeper who never so much as heard of the Gurus and their Truth.

When Christ teaches boundless forgiveness even to our enemies, is he not nearer to Christ and his God who, having realised some thing of Truth, actually makes his heart forgiving than that "Christian" who does not do so but reads the Bible and prays in Christ's

name and regards himself, through the ritual of Baptism, as a true Christian being as he is within the circle line of Christianity.

When the true man first appears, it is certain that he gathers round him a set of men whose hearts and minds beat in unison with his and who, through a common realisation at one time and in one place, form a definite community. The formation of such genuine communities has given birth to what we call the folds of different religions. At that particular time, however, such communities were natural, true and formed by the law of spiritual affinity but afterwards the realisation of the Truth for which they stood became less and less, and people tried to bind themselves together blindly through the ties of common rituals, common forms, common scriptures, common traditions, and common inheritance of the sense of their ancestors' community. They then by such egoistic combinations go against the free working of the law of spiritual affinity and thus actually nullify the spirit of their inherited religions. So different religions are but relics of the past that communities wear like charms round their necks. But, it is as certain as life that the prophets, the founders of religion, would never have let their followers thwart the free working of the law of spiritual affinity, had the latter dared to do so in the life times of the former. Seeing a



✓ Christian's realisation of Truth, Gurus themselves would have called him a Sikh. Religion in these days, the very name of religion disgusts a sincere and true thinker. When it is asserted that religion is the sweetest thing on this earth, how is it that it excites hatred for itself in every true heart in these days? The reason as we have stated above, lies in taking instead of truth and living religion—fresh and sweet realisation—the dead religion, buried in rituals, forms, letters, and idiosyncracies, and individual passions of bigotry and prejudice of those who profess to follow truth, and in bowing to the names and persons of the prophets of Truth rather than to Truth itself. It is in taking a wrong thing for the right one that the so-called religions excite the true thinkers' disgust.

The serious questions are "What is a true Sikh?" "What is a Muhammadan?" "What is a Christian?" The replies may be made "A Sikh is he who believes in ten Gurus and their Sayings;" "A Muhammadan is one who believes in the Prophet and the Koran;" "A Christian is he who follows Christ." This is all right. But the questions in reality remain yet unanswered, for the very simple reason that before we can understand what a logician is we must know what *logic* is. We must then first understand Christ, Muhammad and the Gurus before the questions set can be properly replied.

Whether they were ordinary men like ourselves or something more. Ordinary men they were not—these prophets, whom generations of men have worshipped and will continue to worship as long as the world lasts. They are those who identified themselves with the Universal Life, the Soul and enunciated the Law, the Truth in their own way, through the realisation of which they promised to the erring man the lost paradise of his, an everlasting life, a spiritual kingdom of joy and bliss. They said that the prosperity of both this world and the next stands to serve them who realise the Truth. Therefore the reply to all the different questions of the above mentioned nature will be but one, “A true Sikh is he who realises God, the Truth, the Law (call it by whatever name) in the same way more or less that the Sikh Gurus realised;” “A true Christian is he who realises God in the same spirit in which Christ realised Him;” “A Muhammadan is he who realises Allah with the force and conviction of Muhammad.”

Bricks and stones calling themselves by the names of Sikhs and Hindus, Muhammadans and Christians, will not be heeded thus, unless we have those who have realised like their prophets the Truth, who shall heed ordinary men who go by any names they fancy to call themselves with? In India, Brahmin was the title of one who knew *Brahm*, who realised the Truth, the Universal

Life, the Soul, for himself and hence he was called the teacher. And that true name became afterwards an hereditary title of those who were born Brahmins and who had not realised God. According to Hindus even, therefore, a Christian who realises God will be a true Brahmin rather than a mere Brahmin born. The caste system of Hindus has given the same blow to religion, which the fold-making, circle-drawing, sect-forming tendency of man has given to other different religions. Christianity, Muhammadanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, as they go, are only castes in which the erring and ignorant sleeping humanity has chosen to divide itself to fight and wage constant wars in the name of Love and to be impure in the name of Purity. Religion, however, is not buried in these imposing sepulchres. Search it not in the tombs and graveyards. But go to life itself and see that even to-day, religion or the Realisation of Truth alone is the source of all joy and power. It is the art of arts. It is the *painters* who are painters, and not those who are *born* of them and are no painters. True Sikhs are Gurus born anew and not those born of Sikhs. True Muhammadans are Muhammads born anew to bear witness to God in their soul and not those who call themselves Muhammadans by tracing their pedigree to those who followed Islam.

The hidden joys of the early morning that make the rose red and bedeck the tender jasmine with pearls of dew and bubble up in the smiles of lotus, in the songs of birds, and those secret love whispers of the winds that pour hope and pride even in the tiny lips of the green grass and make the waters jump in sparkling moods, those vital but hidden elements in the season of the morning that make the dead alive and inspire the tiniest birds with the fire of weird dreams and conjure up indescribable aspects of unsurpassed beauty. are rarely appreciated by the so-called pious. Nevertheless they are real aids to the higher and inner realisation of Soul. By the touch of these little pieces of Realisation, our old matrons, feel young like the newly married brides and the old men straighten up their bent backs with so much reliance as if the old age were a mere flimsy excuse, and the young children, boys and maidens feel happier than angels and nymphs. Their eyes lit with a divine glory express more devotion than any crammed up *path* or prayer. Their plucking a bunch of roses and showering its dew bedecked petals on their heads and this soft and cool shower of dew and roses on their whole body is more than a prescribed act of worship in that it gives real, pure joy to them. The young lover's plucking a bunch of the finely fragrant jasmine with his own hands while his love standeth by and his setting



it in her braids as she stands with up-lifted eyes, seeing his joy in love's delicate service and that hidden cheering up of their temper in mutual satisfaction of loving each other, all this is indeed more purifying than bowing five times to God with cold and empty hearts as a mere matter of routine and yet more purifying than a thousand vain baths in the sacred Ganges if devoid of all purifying associations of love and joy. A few steps taken in Love's service are more than a hundred pilgrimages undertaken without the requisite sincerity of heart. Seeing Religion or realising it in the love of that entrancing beauty that flushes in the morning sun, sings in the throats of birds, sparkles in dew and blows kisses in winds, who dares be a miserable atheist refusing the life-giving joys so profusely scattered? Religion is in its essence the twinkling call of some one's charming beauty that is half revealed and half concealed, and what healthy man is there that can resist the dear spell of Love? Anything that charms you so much as to make you forget your very life, or more correctly your local self, is religion whether preached by the gentle murmur of the leaf or the smiling look of an artful maiden, or by the innocence of the child or the hummings of the industrious bee, or the balmy sight of the moon, or by the wild expanse of the sky, or the mystery of stars or the awful power of the direct

realisation of a prophet or by the composing charm of the whole, the all, the holy, the everything, the God. Religion is the art of life and none can live without the subtle influences of this art of joy on his heart in one form or another.

Now in this light, we will discuss what is Sikhism as an illustration. Truth is one and the same everywhere. What applies to Sikhism, applies *mutatis mutandis* to all religions. Sikhism is a name which is associated with Guru Nanak. It is the religion or realisation of the Gurus of the Punjab.

Sikhism is that invisible flood of divine light that pencilled out from this unique constellation of the Gurus and focussed itself in Guru Gobind Singh whose flaming heart made the whole Punjab revolve on and about it, as the moth flies round the lamp light. Its influence was such that everything—position, rank, property, health, wealth, life, wife, brother, mother, friend—was forgotten. The attractions of this light dominated and overpowered the people and no other object of attraction could have any hold on the *Khalsa*. It was not a flimsy flickering light of deception or hypnotism, but a steady, living current of Higher Light and hence of Higher Life and naturally dearer than even the present life, the so-called dearest of the dear. It was its reality that made the

followers of Sikh religion sacrifice so lightly and so cheerfully their everything with perfect nonchalance. The inherent nature of man rebels against the very idea of renunciation of anything however little which may be dear to him, but on the other hand we see, that those very men who could not give up at one time even a small thing were seen covered with smiles of satisfaction when renouncing their very life on the scaffold or on the *ercing suli*. What seems a great sacrifice to others seems to be a joke and a fun with them.

Surely, their eyes must be fixed on something more tangible, more attractive, more beautiful and dearer by far than all what they renounce. They must have a clear sight of their Higher Self whose attraction makes them cling to it so closely and so passionately. We can not throw away anything but the merest rubbish, the merest nothing. They say the kings abdicated their thrones for a begging bowl of Lord Buddha's church but the ignorant admirer does not realise that one kingdom must have been rejected in favour of another more glorious. Such is the law of our nature. A great Renunciation heralds only a greater Realisation.

Sikhism, therefore, is a very great realisation as in a very short time it opened some new vistas before the Punjabee mind so that we find every Sikh so willing and so precipitately ready to sacrifice his all. Sikhism as



a Realisation magnetised the very dust of the Punjab into a mighty blaze of Liberty.

Sikhism is that hidden attraction of the Guru Nanak's soul to which the whole of the Punjab unconsciously gravitated. It is the invisible spell of the tenfold personality of Guru Nanak. It is the composing charm of the vital qualities of the wonderful season of the dawn of Guru Nanak in the Punjab.

Sikhism in its outward form is the catholic Love of Guru Nanak,\* the deep Belief and Conviction of Guru Angad, the Sincere Consecration of Guru Amar Das, the Zeal, Enthusiasm and Generosity of Guru Ram Das, the Devotion, Tenderness and Poetry of Guru Arjan, the Sportive, Nimble activity of Guru Har Gobind, the Meditative Silence of Guru Har Rai, the Child-like Sweetness and Innocence of Guru Har Krishna, the Great Renunciation, the Calm Sincerity, the Glorious Purity of Guru Teg Bahadur† and the Burning Heroism, the Divine Recklessness and Self-Reliance of Guru Gobind Singh.‡ It is the unity-seeing and all-embracing light of the eyes of all Gurus.

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\* The Life and Teachings of the Great Guru Nanak, Rs. 5.

† The Life and Teachings of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur with free translation of his Shabads and Shalokas. annas twelve.

‡ The Life of the Great Guru Gobind Singh, price Rs. 5.

All these can be had from publisher, Bhai Amar Singh, Manager Khalsa Agency, Amritsar.

As such, Sikhism is coursing in the blood of our five rivers and in the very veins of the Punjab soil. Sikhism is an invisible nobility that is mingled with the being of the modern Punjab. It is a hidden but living heart that is throbbing still, under heavy veils of words and songs, rites and ritual, names and sects.

It is colourless like love. It is divine like light. In the flash of Guru Gobind Singh's sword and in the cooling streak of Guru Nanak's smile, it is the same Realisation. Descending to daily life, Sikhism is the altruism of the highest order. It dwells as infinite compassion in the heart and head of every noble and true Sikh, be he under the veil of any name and let him be wherever he may happen to be. When other creed-mongers are busy preaching the tenets of their prophets and trying to measure their work by the number of converts made, the true Sikh is busy reaching water to the wounded on the battlefield, and is tearing his own turban and shirt to dress some one's wounds or is nursing the sick and helping the needy, may be his friend or enemy. It is his habit not to care for fame and not to take diary notes of his work, because his aim is "to pour floods of Love and hide himself." While others stand with their holy books to corroborate the truth of their statements and refer the mind for conviction to dead authorities speaking in dead languages, the true Sikh is his own proof and his very

personality is the vindication of his own humanitarianism and the greatness of his Guru's Realisation. On a Sikh all human beings have an equal claim and he is the friend of all and is everywhere at home. The living altruism of his heart translates itself in his daily life into his complete self-abnegation in the service of "man, bird and beast" and this alone is to him the greatest lesson of his faith and religion.

Beloved of all Khalsa, Mai Sundri, the heroine of many a battle, leaves to us the legacy of a true Sikh life. Warring as she was all the while with the Nawabs, the oppressors of the people, it was she who took compassion on a wounded Pathan lying by the road-side helpless and in great agony of pain, and it was she who in spite of his being of the enemy's party bore him with the help of another sister on her own shoulders to the secret rendezvous of the Khalsa and nursed him day and night for a month till he was cured. What mattered it to her great soul, if he in his ignorance proved so ungrateful as to betray her and be an instrument in her being captured afterwards by the Nawab?

It is life that is wanted, not words or repetition of words. It is life that proves religion or realisation not logic—chopping. It is life that convinces not rhetoric. It is life that is the solution of all problems, not

cleverness of intellect. It is life that begets life not sermons, be there a shipload of them.

Does tenderness of heart need any sermonising talk to impress its stamp on others? Let it be in the secret recesses of heart, and let it come, its very presence would thrill others. Does the innocence of the child need a verbose lecture to impress others? So the genuine sincerity of the Sikh needs no commentary. Guru Gobind Singh and his Sikhs are giving a pitched battle to the swarming odds of the oppressive Moghuls and his noble and true Sikhs are reaching water to the lips of the dying and wounded soldiers, irrespective of their being friends or foes ! Does that need any commentary, dear reader ?

The poor and wretched reformer of the present age, while giving a little help to the orphans, is so insincere and egoistic that he insists upon their compulsory conversion first, the meaning of which their unknowing minds hardly understand. Little morsels of food are denied to those who do not prescribe to the particular whims and idiosyncracies and hobbies of the little life and still more little experiences of the helping reformer. But on the other hand, to succour people in distress, to reach a helping hand to the needy without asking his name, is the habit of a true soul and he does it quite free, unasked and unrewarded, as the sun gives his light and the rose its per-



fume and God His grace to everything. We disagree with all shallow religionists and creed-mongers who in a spirit of contagious imitation and rivalry tend to reduce this high spiritual altruism of the Gurus and its transmitted grandeur to the human life, to a solely proselytizing creed, or in other words, a ritualistic and formal religion on the common dull level with others, and who try in vain, to win great spiritual battles that their Gurus won with life and realisation, with the toy-guns and vain bullets of empty rhetoric and street gossip.

If this sickly tendency of preaching religion that the religionists manifest were to change into an active realisation of it in their own life, it is certain that such a life will find universal response. A good and true man is honoured everywhere and in all countries. To the Man of Realisation, the earnest spirits of all races will gravitate. Forms and rituals and individual associations and local traditions can never be preached universally. In order to make any religion influence universally, it has to produce life of realisation which by its acts of high altruism, of universal love, of universal sympathies infuses its spirit in all the different races of man without so many words. Thoughts shall differ, beliefs shall be various, associations different with different hearts, but life is one all over and life alone will secure a univer-

sal response. Those who are anxious to preach the Realisation of the Gurus through preachers, should note that the world has true Sikhs in any number under different names and shapes in different countries, and preachers who have not the life of Realisation will be abashed in their presence. But if Sikhism were to spread as a life rather than as a mere name and form, then be sure, it is a universal church already. Sikhism is indistinctly merging into the real spirit of Christianity and the true Christianity like fragrance is crossing its borders and seas of separation and is already mingled with the perfume of the Guru's Realisation. All religions are serving one another and the same fundamental truth. Every religion has the whole world for its congregation. Every religion and so Sikhism is already universal, only if its votaries were to live in its active realisation rather than in its name and language.

A religion that holds no refreshment, no vitalising element, which even we find in such commonplace gifts of nature as fresh water and fresh air and little mountain scenes, in shining pebbles reflecting moon light, in fragrant spring wearing violets and lilies, is worth all the contempt shown to it by the wiser men and is only a dead letter and form, which may be better burnt up for purposes of cleanliness and spiritual hygiene.

Sikhism like any truth needs no defenders. Self-styled pleaders are themselves so poor in its real light. It is that Self-luminous Truth which has been magnetising the soul of people, and the phenomenon of the Sikh heroism is, in itself, a conclusive proof of its powers of making the divinity of man blossom out. At its touch all carnality falls off. And so has been Truth working in all ages and in all countries. Such is real Sikhism that would brook no difference, no hatred, no duality.

Sikhism counts numerous martyrs in its fold, who gave up their life for the sake of even those little symbols of speech, but which to them were, in their freshness, the emblems of their higher life itself. Sikhism had worked such wonders in their minds that they had realised their Immortal Self and to them death was no death, life was no life. Indeed religion grows where blood flows cheap and in plenty. They were veritable torches of that *Brahmajnan*, the divine knowledge, the quintessence of life, the glory of human mind, the *summum bonum* of our spiritual life. The life of a people is then only powerful when its individuals play with death as children sport with flowers.

“Sat Sri Akal ... The Deathless one,  
the Sole Reality.”

“Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa ... The wholly conse-  
crated Khalsa is  
thine, O Lord !”

"Sri Wahguru ji ki Fateh... The victory too is  
thine, O Lord "

"Ek onKar ... ... The one, the supreme  
Lord."

These and more are some of the symbols of speech of this wonderful faith, which kept constantly before the eyes of the Khalsas the lofty teachings and the blazing light of the Gurus, which kept their thoughts steeped in the Divine Yoga that the Gurus strove to impart to them. To them who had come in touch with the Realisation of the Gurus, these *shabads* were in fact living flames from that Spiritual Sun, in whose light they lived, moved and had their being, and they being completely entranced by its divine glory, forgot their all and stood on a level above ordinary humanity. Hence, as it might appear now, it was not merely a foolish obstinacy as some critics might say, nor a haughty bigotry that made them sacrifice so much. It is the test of a true soldier to prefer death to the ignoble act of laying down his arms. Indeed, it is through the Sikh martyrdom and their noble disinterested altruism that the Punjab has still the latent magazines of spiritual and physical power, which though lying hidden from the sight of ordinary thinkers, would be moved again in times of urgent need by the hands of God. Sikhism outgrowing and outspreading all its creeds and dogmas, is still a living and



dynamical energy of the Punjab. There is a depth in its spirituality which only those can gauge who lose themselves in it. But let the disinterested reader have some idea of it by hearing the stories of the life of such *lost ones*. Let him see the depth of their feeling, the transparency of their character, the strength of their convictions, the powers of their hearts, their great reliance on the Divine, the Invisible, the Unseen Self of the universe, and above all let him mark their reckless, active, unity-seeing Love now and then waving up in fearless Heroism of a very high order.

“ This is he who felled by foes,  
Sprang harmless up, refreshed by blows,  
He to captivity was sold,  
But him no prison wall would hold,  
Though they sealed him in a rock  
Mountain chains he can unlock;  
Thrown to lions for their meat,  
The crouching lions kissed his feet,  
Bound to the stakes, no flames appalled,  
But arched over him an honouring vault.”—EMERSON.

The more one loses sight of the world and the local self, the nearer he goes to the Great Reality, the One Supreme

Spirit which underlies all the changing phenomena. The more did a nation any time follow this Reality with a disregard of the visible, this infinitesimal part of the great invisible life, the more it rose and prospered. The index of this great Truth working in an individual or a community is the amount of cheerful martyrdom they can undergo. They are truly one with the Reality who know not that they have any head to lose. Such ones may not necessarily be beheaded, but what of that, their physical crucifixion is merely contingent.

In the following pages I have given a short narrative of the lives of five sikh martyrs who, though coming from the commons, were by the touch of Sikhism made sublime. To study the worth of any religion, we have to search for it in the heart of its professors and see if some patent signs of true greatness glitter in the dust of its so-called little men. It is the little men with great views and Realisation of Soul that are really the bulwork of any working institution or any living nation. A few friends told me it was useless to make so much of these historically insignificant figures. From the viewpoint of Truth, the great historical figures are sometimes not worth even a copper piece, while the little, insignificant men of Realisation may be the hidden cause of the silent upbuilding of a whole race. What was

Muhammad, but (historically speaking) a very small man ? No king, nor any great general. And our dear Christ was a carpenter's son. History has not yet learnt to respect true men, and true men disregard it in the same way. But the centre of all things is great and true. The differences of high and low vanish in the reality of things, in the Realisation of the Soul—the Universal Life. Though outwardly some may not shine with as great brilliance as some other more gifted geniuses do, yet one who has realised his inner Self, is at one with All-Greatness and with All-Perfection. Then an unlettered orphan or a carpenter or a peasant is as deep a study for human mind as the splendours of a mighty genius.

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## V.

### MARTYRDOM.

Before I proceed with the lives of these martyrs, the following thoughts on martyrdom will not be out of place here. All religions have had their martyrs. Life flourishes on the manure of death. One star is fashioned out of the *debris* of another. The spirit that fashions all the common materials into beauty new and

newer still, never loses its freshness. He makes and remakes. The bloom that you see on the cheeks of a living maiden is the rose that has fled from the cheeks of a dead one. The mystic philosopher, Umar Khayam of Persia, puts the secret of martyrdom in a verse.

"I sometime think that never blows so red

The rose, as where some buried Ceasor bled.

That every hyacinth the garden wears,

Dropt in her laps, from some one's lovely head."

The past is martyred for the present. Objects change, individuals die, dear ones depart, the life of nations becomes but a moral, so that the true and whole man may thrive. The key to every man is his thought. His greatest thought is his Love. His greatest love is his religion. Therefore it is natural that History should have recorded the greatest martyrdoms in the name of Religion. Just like the Law of gravitation, this Law of sacrifice or the Law of death is working in every thing right before our eyes.

One flower blooms on the dropped petals of another. One tree grows, making another of its kind its manure. The rose is red, having been fed on the blood of some one. The crimson colour is the colour of the Eternal youth of soul. It is the intensest colour of life. The richest moments of our lives are dyed in blood. The



richest and the highest thoughts of man are written in its fiery characters. Deeper than fire, deeper than the Morning Disc, is the crimson tinge of a Hero's blood. That soil alone is fit to produce worthy guardians of Love and Liberty, whose daily manure is the heart-blood of men. It is through the blood that the crimson temper of the heroic thoughts, the lofty ideals and the noble characters of our past is transmitted to us. It is in the blood that thoughts dissolve themselves. It is in the blood that love transfuses itself. In the blood of every race all its past lives sublimed. Hence the great pride one feels for the purity of his blood and the great reverence he cherishes for his ancestors. What we are, we are made out of our past. We do not walk on mere dust of the land, but on the pools of the sacred fluid of our earthly existence. The salt of every soil is the taste of the blood of its people. To redeem every inch of the soil and call it own's own we have to drop our life's blood in price. Once, as a tradition says, it would not rain and the king dropt his blood on the soil, which act brought showers of rain from the high clouds. Therefore sacrifices that were made for the sake of acquisition of soil from the wild nature, or for the sake of national honor and liberty, were merely fair and square bargains for calling the land thus acquired "my own, my native Land." Patriotism is nothing but extreme enthusiasm for the soil, which feels

not in its heat the constant flow of life-blood. Those are martyrs indeed, who, in obedience to the dear and sacred relationship that subsists between the blood and the soil, cheerfully part with every thing for enriching the veins of the soil. It is on the blood of those touching sacrifices that others live and thrive. Every thought needs some quantity of blood for its life. The Heroism for the soil is less passionate, less vehement and less powerful than the Heroism awakened by Love. The latter pulsates very intensely and something like a storm of lightning sweeps over the human heart as soon as a lover appears. His eyes are fixed somewhere else than what people say "he himself." The cowards die a pale death, the lover dies a crimson one. The Heroism which Man's Religion or his amplest love awakens in him is something far more awe-inspiring and sublime than any other deeds of Nature. Once if a true lover pours blood, the earth trembles, the sky turns red, the grasses are flushed, the rivers assume red colour, the soil turns red, the snows on the mountains become rosy, and the future temper of the race takes its colour from this Red Moment.

✓ In the martyr's blood, the past is justified, the present is made and the future is foreshadowed.

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## VI.

## THE MARTYR'S POSITION IN HIMSELF.

The sight of Love is the sight of our Higher Self. The eyes that have seen Love see nothing else. The heart that loves does not even throb. The mind that loves can think nothing else but love. As soon as the light of love dawns on man, all stupid thoughts of body, mind and property vanish away and he is struck dead. The stroke of Love is more sudden and more fatal than the stroke of lightning itself. A lover is all dead but love in him, just as a rope that is made red hot in fire is all fire and no rope. The thought "this is I" is burnt and love alone throbs in his pulse and glows on his face. Such a full blown rose comes up before the public gaze like a rare meteor. At times people say: this king or that mob has killed him. It is claimed that the saint was martyred then when he was crucified, while the lover like the distant star had had his setting already long ago and the light of his martyrdom has only taken due time to reach the people's eyes. Hence, to the martyr, his death means very little, for he has risen in love and is one with his beloved object. He had renounced his earth long ago and what matters it to him how it is treated by the world. Count Tolstoy is extremely sad that crucifixion is not possible for him in this age.

To the lover, it is not the tyrant that waves his naked sword on his head, but his love. To Archimedes, the solution of the mathematical problem was all. What cared he for the sword and the head ?

To a hero, the mundane life is not worth a broken shell and in the markets of Truth it is auctioned very cheap indeed.

"I am God" said Mansûr. The Muhammadan Ruler asked him not to say so, as it was blasphemous. He reiterated this sacred exclamation all the same. He was stoned and he was torn asunder being pierced through the heart by a *Suli*, but what cared he ? It was a mere fun to him and he won't obey the king. There he throws away the so-called dear and precious life like that ! Shamas Tabrez was flayed alive and the mighty spiritual king thought the commanding monarch to be a dog at his door who begged for his skin, and lo ! he tears it off with his nails from head to foot and throws it to the dog with a royal forgiveness. What an ordinary man thinks to be most precious, means trash and rubbish to a hero. The teacher of Shibli, the Persian Sufi, gave his disciple the very first lesson in love by asking him to throw his phenomenal riches—his rubies, jewels, gold and pearls—in a running river. They, the martyrs, scorn to give their rubbish in charity. They give *themselves up* when they feel charitable. As a sporting barrister throws



his shuttlecock high up in the air, laughs and enjoys, so a true man plays with his own life. On every little touch, off it goes like the shuttlecock. In a body that is sure to decompose, in a life that is bound to pass like a wail or a cry, he takes no stock of his enjoyments. In the so-called death opens his real life.

How truly Emerson says. "The Hero is a mind of such balance that no disturbances can shake his will, but pleasantly, and as if it were, merrily, he advances to his own music, alike in frightful alarms and in the tipsy mists of Universal dissoluteness."

"The Hero is not fed on sweets  
Daily his own heart he eats,  
Chambers of the great are jails.  
And head-winds right for royal sails."

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## VII.

### THE MARTYR FROM THE POPULAR EYE.

But the man who cannot concede even a Jot to others sees in the martyr something very sublime. As an earthquake shakes the earth, so the crimson sacrifice of the Martyr radely awakens his consciousness. For the time

being, he sees the Truth of his own being. He dreams of something more real, attractive and nobler by far than all his own thoughts and deeds. It is martyrdom, that can with its ruby lips, awaken people by a single mute sermon in blood. The Christ's Bible is respected, because of the indelible ink in which it is written. Babism in Modern Persia has spread like a red conflagration because of the river of blood that has fed its flame. Liberty, Love, Truth, still remain the ideals of Humanity and still struggle in the human consciousness for fuller expression, for better manifestation. As soon as the martyr touches the inner chords of life, the whole populace is stirred to its deepest depths and all flock to him, regarding him as a beautiful manifestation of their own longed for ideal. They cling to him with as much passion and love as if it were their own heart. In such mysterious ways, the higher ideals are placed before the popular eye in crimson colours, and it takes a very long time to efface these vivid impressions. The popular eye, enamoured of the external form, realises in the flushing death of a martyr the great Invisible Reality, finds more tangible proof and demonstration of the Truth for which the martyr stood than what reason can give and is thus convinced deeply of the Great God. What logic, rhetoric, persuasion, love, preaching and personality fail to accomplish, the renunciation of all these—the martyrdom—effects in a twinkling of an eye. The martyrs are the torches of humanity by which, it travels from the

low to the high spheres of life. From them we receive a culture of heart, which makes us rise above all meanness.

The martyr's blood is not only the cement of our church but it is the liquid fire of our being, the flame of our life, the soul of our progress.

All honor therefore to the Martyrs, the crest Jewels of Humanity ! Let us keep them before our mind's eyes for fresh inspiration and for occasional draughts of New Life.



# BHAI MANI SINGH.

## THE SIKH SAINT.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE AMRITA CEREMONY.

Aurangzeb was on the Imperial throne of Delhi. Through lack of strict system and organisation of the State, the Muhammadan Governors were trampling, in their ignorance, their poor subjects, under their feet, and the human life, on the slightest pretence, was taken as easily as that of a chicken. The only judicial officer was the Town Qazi and his verdict was final. The folk lore of these ages, that come to us through history or through tradition, paint this Qazi with stone in his breast instead of a heart. He is ruthlessly merciless in his judgments to the non-believers. Through his orders, the horrible scenes of Huguenot persecution in France and Christian martyrdom in general throughout Europe in the middle ages, were enacted in the Punjab and other provinces during Aurangzeb's reign. As in the present India, the colour of an Indian is his great disqualification, so in those times was his faith. Excepting the faith of Islam, the holding of any other faith or belief was not only a disqualification but a crime for which heavy



punishments were inflicted. The Court of the Nawabs or the Governors, heard no defence and allowed no appeal. Thus, it depended on the whim, the grudge, and the passion of an individual to make or mar a particular man or a community.

Aurangzeb, though a stern ruler and professing to be religious, yet, as the contemporary history proves, failed to do justice to his Hindu subjects, because, true to his own faith, he thought them *kaffirs* and held in all sincerity that their conversion to Islam was their only true good and salvation. Hence the then Emperor's bigotry and partiality for Islam, quite unworthy of the exalted position of a king who, in Asia, is the father of his subjects, was a great encouragement to his petty and foolish governors of different provinces for committing crimes of oppression and tyranny against men of alien faith. History shows to what great extremes of cruelty and tyranny they went in their blind zeal and ignorance and in the gratification of their passions. Zulum or tyranny was rampant and the rulers who should have been respected, honoured and loved, were regarded by the people with the same feelings of awe, hatred and fear, as the sheep have towards, their natural enemies—the wolves and the lions. This dangerous attitude of the inner hatred of the people towards their Government could not but, sooner or later, call forth the hidden Heroes of the

land and end in Revolution. The unbridled tyranny of the powers that be, feels itself, always, quite safe and secure, regarding the people as too weak and effeminate to resist its mighty strength, but the very weakness of the people bursts like a furious storm on the crowned heads at an extreme moment and undeceives the blind powers. The subordinates of the Moghul Empire were sowing the seeds of disaffection and we have not to go very far in the history of Aurangzeb's time when signs of its decay become visible both from within and without. General Revolution in the Punjab was headed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the Mahratta Rebellion against the Empire was led by the great General Siva Ji.

In that remote province of Kashmir, the high-handedness of its Governor knew no bounds and our pen fails to narrate the horrors of his zulum. The Kashmiri Brahmins started in a body to seek the aid of the Real and the Uncrowned king of the people then, we mean Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. To save the situation, through his wisdom, he thought of a sacrifice and became a willing oblation for the sake of the people, and as all readers know, was beheaded at Delhi under the orders of the Emperor Aurangzeb. \* This incident has a great spiritual significance, which we will discuss when

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\*The Life and Teachings of this Guru is published in a separate book, giving free translation of his shabads and shalokas, by Bhai, Amar Singh Manager, The Khalsa Agency, Amritsar ; priced annas twelve.

we come to write the account of the Ninth Guru's life, but so much might be said here that it was the blood of Guru Teg Bahadur that cemented the scattered Sikhs into a nation,—a living organisation. It was his sacrifice which wrought such hidden changes in their minds, which very shortly afterwards turned them into a right, royal military band of patriots who loved the afflicted people beyond anything and who vied with each other to fall on the same soil with which their Guru had mingled his life-blood. The horizontal rays of that setting sun, of that memorable evening of Guru Teg Bahadur's sacrifice, which was reddened by the pure blood of the Guru, bathed and baptised the transparent hearts of the Khalsa in the fire of the martyr's love.

When the worthy son of the worthy father, the Young Guru Gobind Singh, came forward with drawn sword, to husband his resources, to count his followers, to test his heroes, in order to lead them in the battles of National war to be waged for the rescue of the people and to raise aloft the banner of Liberty in the land, in order to publish once more the inherent greatness of the Hindu race in scrolls of lightning, in order to remind the Moghuls of the great Law of Unity that all are children of the Great God and none can recklessly tyrannise over others however weak and helpless they might feel on particular occasions, for any great length

of time, without proper retribution; it was in the fields of Anandpur that this young God was greeted by thousands of his followers. Guru Gobind Singh pitched up a tent in the centre of this sea of men. He went in the tent and with a naked sword in his hand came out, and demanded five Sikhs, who with pleasure would offer their heads, as preliminary oblations to the flame—(pointing to his sword) of the Goddess of Truth for the sake of the Guru. Only a little hesitation was shown at the suddenness and strangeness of the order, but one by one the required five came forward. The wise Guru, was taking them inside the tent one by one and every time, one goat was killed, whose blood flowed out in a stream from inside the tent to test whether others, seeing the real danger, got terrified or no. After having thus tested the mettle of his followers, Guru Gobind Singh announced that the Khalsa was strong enough to receive the power divine and having received it, to utilise it, in raising the Banner of Freedom. On this occasion, the great Guru devised an ingenious method to awaken the consciousness of his Sikhs, through the power of his mighty will and his deep spirituality, and he thought of transmitting, by this process, his blazing Heroism, his infinite self reliance, his all conquering optimism to his followers. It was a unique ceremony both symbolical and psychological. The people have been writing long discourses on this "*Amrita* ceremony," but to us it is the same secret



will power with which Guru Nanak transferred the whole of his own exalted consciousness to Guru Angad Dev and other Gurus in their turn, did to their deserving disciples and successors. The distinctive feature of Guru Gobind Singh's *Amrita* Ceremony is that he made it more visible by his symbolic ritual and democratised the great spirituality of the Gurus in transferring it to the Khalsa Panth, and in thus laying the foundation of the great Khalsa Republic.

In a great Darbar held near Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh, for the first time, made use of his this process. It was the month of April, the first of Baisakh, in the year 1699, A. D. (1756 Bikrami), on Sunday at *Kesgarh*, that Guru Gobind Singh dressed in right royal style, sat on his throne midst hundred of thousands of his followers. It was an imposing scene and the holy Guru cheered the hearts of the assembled by saying, "Thrice blessed is your pure and sincere faith O Dear blessed ones! You are an infinite Power of the Khalsa Panth. The great task that lies before us will be easily accomplished by my Sikhs." Then he dressed those five chosen ones with his own hand, quite ceremoniously, in attractive and gleaming suits, and the scene was so solemn, so imposing, so majestic, so thrilling, when he prepared the *Amrita*. He brought water in an iron pan, with his own hand, from the river flowing by, and through

his mighty will power, he dissolved his own consciousness in it, stirring it symbolically, in that iron pan with his own sword *khanda*. Through JapJi, Jap Sahib, and other *shabads* of the Gurus he mesmerised the water.

This *Amrita* or the Nectar of Immortality is the original devise of Guru Gobind Singh himself. The success of his method was complete. The Sikh History bears evidence to the great valour, the power of endurance, the phenomenal self-reliance, the royal grandeur, the exalted consciousness of the Khalsa.

First of all, the chosen five were thus blessed by the Guru and afterwards many more came forward to receive the great grace and amongst the first twenty five was Bhai Mani Singh, whose life is the subject of this essay. Bhai Mani Singh was one of those fortunate beings, who were in close touch with this great soul. Myriads more that drank the Nectar of Immortality from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh were so many myriad selves of the Guru himself. "Wonder it is, that Guru Gobind Singh himself is the Guru and he himself the *Chela*," said he. The Sikhs honoured him and he honoured them in return. A Fraternity was formed and Guru Gobind Singh occupied the position of a loving father.

"Sri Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wah Guru ji ke Fateh" was the motto and the natural salutation of this

Brotherhood. The history of the great Sikh Revolution in the Punjab, is nothing but a brief record of the great and mighty deeds of this unique fraternity, and to the ordinary reader all what they did seems miraculous. From the time of his initiation, Bhai Mani Singh always remained in company of his great Teacher and imbibed his great traits of character, his spirituality, and above all he had the great privilege of serving him day and night to his heart's content. He would read works with him, translate them, add commentaries of obscure passages. He would write M.S.S. for his Guru and do other literary miscellaneous work. His this part of life is not visible to us.

It was all retrospective and we only can see in him a quiet, happy, silent Sikh, in deep reverie and blissful ecstasy of love. He was lost in Guru Gobind Singh, and in the person of Bhai Mani Singh, we see nothing else but love, rapture, devotion and the deep silence of soul,—A Consciousness Divine.

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## CHAPTER II.

The very first event of Bhai Mani Singh's life is his separation from Guru Gobind Singh under very cruel circumstances.

After the seige and evacuation of the Fort of Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh had to fly for his very life before the pursuing odds of the Imperial forces who had treacherously broken their promise of letting him and his party escape unscathed, if they only gave up the fort to them. In that great consternation, his family had to disperse. His mother, with her two young grandsons, took shelter under the roof of a Brahmin cook of the family. The reader knows how this wretched *Brahmin* betrayed them and reported their presence in his house to the Nawab of Sirhind, and their tragic end. The two innocent ones, both of them under ten years of age, were mercilessly buried alive in a wall and the terrible shock killed the mother. Guru Gobind Singh with his two other sons and a few Sikhs escaped to Chamkor.\*

Bhai Mani Singh and a small party of the Sikhs were left, who braving all dangers saved Mai Sundran and Mai Sahib Dewan, the holy consorts of the Guru. As luck would have it they arrived at Dehli. Here Bhai Mani Singh remained for many years in their service. He would read Scriptures and hold discourses to the great satisfaction of the assembled Sikhs of Dehli and to the great consolation of Mai Sundran and Mai Sahib Dewan, in

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\*These soul stirring anecdotes can be seen in a separate booklet "Victory of Faith," published by Bhai Amar Singh, Manager, The Khalsa Agency, Amritsar ; price annas six



their time of dire distress. Mai Sundran would plunge into deep sorrow, whenever the story of the tragic end of the children and the troubles falling thick and fast on her husband's hand, was related in her presence. Her agony may be better imagined than described. But Bhai Mani Singh, with his usual warm eloquence and deep insight into the faith of Sikhism, would relate to her in his sweet tone of sincerity, the great sacrifice of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur and others who had suffered and died for the same cause. He would lay before her the beautiful passages of the Scriptures bearing on renunciation and the Great Beyond. He would thus afford her relief. He would keep both of them in divine moods of Resignation and Renunciation.

Bhai Mani Singh was a great apostle of his great teacher, and Mai Sundran loved to call him her son.

He was loved and revered by the people of Dehli and his holy presence had strengthened that centre of Sikh Religion.

By this time the tempest of war with the Imperial forces had partially passed off and Guru Gobind Singh settled in peace and solitude for some time again at Dam Dama Sahib in Malwa. Hearing of this Bhai Mani Singh with his characteristic skill

and activity managed to take Mata Sundran and Sahib Diwan with him all the way from Dehli to Dam Dama. Bhai Mani Singh was greeted by the radiant smile of the great Guru and the sweet voice of his love blessed him saying, "O! Beloved Bhai Mani Singh, you have borne great hardships. Tribulation and trials come as our Lord Love wills and they pass off as he wishes. Such is the sport of the Deathless One!"

On this occasion, Bhai Mani Singh wrote the Granth Sahib over again, as Guru Gobind Singh went on repeating it from his holy lips. It is said Dhir Mal would not lend the copy of Granth Sahib that was with him, and in his pride challenged Guru Gobind Singh to rewrite the whole book from his memory, if he were a true Guru. Accordingly Guru Gobind Singh repeated the whole book without missing even a syllable, but intentionally and conciously made two slight changes in deference to the greatness of his spiritual fathers. He added the beautiful hymns and poems of Guru Teg Bahadur to this edition, which is known as the Dam Dama Edition. It was kept for a long time at Dam Dama, but the evidence as to its whereabouts now is conflicting. Some say that Nadir Shah took it to Kabul and others say it is still in Patna.

After this great literary task was done, Guru Gobind Singh thought of travelling to Deccan. Mai Sahib Dewan prepared herself to go with him at any cost, while Mai Sundran obeying implicitly the Guru's orders accompanied Bhai Mani Singh again to Dehli.

On arrival in Deccan, Guru Gobind Singh found a man in Bawa Banda, a *Bairagi Sadhu*, whom he thought fit to carry on his military exploits in the Punjab. Having had some mental contest with him the Guru made him his disciple and commissioned him to work in the Punjab, at the head of the Sikhs. He gave him some of his own arms and blessed him. But he gave him strict injunctions to strictly observe the vow of celibacy he had kept till then, and never to try in his ascendancy to pass himself as the religious leader of the Sikhs, otherwise the Sikhs would give him up. Thus commissioned Banda came to the Punjab and his military exploits show that he was equal to the task entrusted to him. He proved himself to be a great general, as villages after villages he pillaged and ravaged. Town after town was captured. And the sword of Banda was a terror to the Mussalman Rulers. But Banda forgot his own position, and by and by he lost sight of the strict injunctions of his Master. He married a young girl of Chamba Valley and in his closing days of his life he tried to play the Guru

as well, defying the authority of the Guru. He turned out to be an oppressor—not only a persecutor of tyrants but an oppressor of the people as well. For these and other reasons there was a split among the Sikhs, the majority of whom left him. His strength weakened, and he was captured with a number of his retainers when he was carrying everything before him. But let it be said to his credit that he and every one of his party met their death heroically at Dehli.

As it proved afterwards, the days of Guru Gobind Singh's sojourn in the Deccan were the closing days of the Guru's life. When he saw the end approaching very near, he asked Mai Sahib Dewan to leave Deccan and start for Dehli. She entreated that the very sight of the Guru was her life and she could not even take her meals without seeing him, and that she could not possibly live at such a long distance in exile. In reply the Guru asked her to take the arms of the 6th Guru as dear relics with her, and with a voice of love and gentleness, exhorted her to spend the remaining days of her life in worship and meditation and he assured her that it was absolutely necessary for her to leave Deccan. "Seeing these arms," said he, "think that you have seen me."



Obeying the orders, she started for Delhi and joined Mai Sundran and Bhai Mani Singh. Mai Sahib Dewan proved too delicate to bear this separation from her beloved Lord, and in her short sojourn at Delhi she pined and she grieved and finally expired in the great Love of the Guru. She died because she was removed from the atmosphere of her life. A fish cannot live without water.

Meanwhile a great dispute had risen between the Sikhs and Banda, as said above, by the latter's insolence and rebellion against the order of the Guru himself. Banda was still carrying on his aggressive policy and causing terror and misery wherever he went. Bahadur Shah, who was the ruling Moghul Emperor at Delhi, had great respect for the Guru and he treated Bhai Mani Singh and the holy consort of Guru Gobind Singh with due deference and respect. Hearing the blood-curdling details of Banda's cruelty, he sent a message to Mai Sundran, saying that enough bloodshed was done in the name of revenge and offering a *Jagir* to Banda, desired that by her orders he should give up his this sort of rowdy's life and thenceforth live in peace with the Empire. This peaceful settlement was very well intentioned. Accordingly Mai Sundran sent a letter to Banda, desiring him to desist from further aggression and come to a peaceful settlement with the Emperor.



This letter was treated, in the presence of many Sikhs with great contempt and scorn. Mai Sundran, hearing this, wrote a general manifesto to the Panth, urging them to give up all connection with Banda, who in his ascendancy, had forgotten all behests of Guru Gobind Singh. Thus the Sikhs and the followers of Banda broke out amongst themselves and they would often come to open hand to hand fight, in the near premises of the Sacred Hari Mandar, the famous golden temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar.

Afterward, Bhai Mani Singh himself had to go to settle this daily-increasing dispute. Perhaps this start from Delhi was the long start for the great beyond, as he never returned to Delhi again. He was blessed by the mother of the Khalsa, and Mai Sundran wrote to all Sikhs that Bhai Mani Singh was her beloved son and a good, noble and true Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and urged in her own pathetic way on the Panth the advisability of their abiding by his advice and guidance.

As soon as Bhai Mani Singh reached Amritsar with this order, he was installed as the Minister of Hari Mandar. Bhai Mani Singh with his characteristic shrewdness brought forth a very ingenious proposal before the Khalsa and the followers of Banda to settle the

never-ending dispute and both parties agreed to it. He said, "Let us throw two different letters in the *Amrita* of Hari Mandir tank, one bearing the name of the Guru on it and the other of Banda, and see which, after sinking once, first comes up to the surface. Any name that comes up remains the master of the situation and all offerings of the Panth go to him." It was a stratagem of will power, which was bound to succeed well with all the Sikhs and convince them once for all of their faith in the Guru. And he added further, "If none of the letters float up, then all these offerings go to the Muhammadan rulers," and he got one or two chief Mussalmans of Amritsar as umpires.

The proposal was carried out and two such letters were thrown into the Holy tank. First both of them went down, and after some time, the letter bearing the name of Guru Gobind Singh Ji came up to the great delight of all Sikhs. A moral victory was won over the followers of Banda. When the latter saw the result unfavourable, they refused to accept it. But Bhai Mani Singh had wonderfully succeeded in consolidating the hesitating Sikhs into one united whole and only a few devoted followers of Banda remained out of the pale of Sikhs.

Older heads advised the followers of Banda not to break their own ranks, but all counsels were unheeded.

and the gulf between the two parties went on widening day by day. When matters came to an unbearable pitch, a hard fight took place between the two parties, with sword and guns, just opposite to the place, now known as Takhat-Akal, in the very precincts of Hari Mandar at Amritsar. It continued for full three days. It was the final contest for supremacy so desperately fought by the followers of Banda. Truth conquered at last and the latter were completely vanquished.

For many years peace reigned and Bhai Mani Singh presided over the Khalsa, as the venerable and worthy minister Granthi Gyani of Hari Mandar. Here a few words on the character of Bhai Mani Singh will not be out of place. We have shown, Bhai Mani Singh had imbibed the spirituality and the literary acumen of his teacher. But his daring enterprise to have taken the two ladies safe to Delhi is a proof of the robust and heroic side of his constitution.

The faithful service to the ladies in his charge, the great courtesy, respect, love and worship of his heart towards them shows clearly his great devotion to the great mission to which he belonged.

Bhai Mani Singh seems to have forgotten his birth-place, his parents, his kith and kin in the love of the Holy



Light, the Charming Beauty of the Sikh Faith. He was a close associate of the Tenth Guru and a mystic who by his magnetic voice held his audiences spell-bound and whose every moment of life was spent in divine communion and contemplation, whose daily work to him was a sort of transcendental worship, whose hours in the night glittered with dreams of the victory of Truth, and whose leisure moments in the day shone with imaginings of the splendours of Guru Gobind Singh's personal charms and impersonal glories and in whose belief the very touch of Guru Gobind Singh's feet with the Punjab soil was the emancipation of the people. In him we recognise the divine consciousness of the Sikh religion and in his body we see a mere vehicle of this great spirit.

He forgot his own little self. The human in him was so silent and motionless, that it may be said to have been dead to all intents and purposes, while the Divine in him had blossomed and was spreading its sweet aroma and gentle aura around, wherever he happened to be. The flesh was all converted into Divine light and in Bhai Mani Singh's personality, we see nothing but a beautiful radiation of Love and Light.

He was wholly transparent. His clear eyes revealed to any that chanced to meet his glance, the white

sincerity of Bhai Mani Singh, melting at the slightest touch of pity or compassion in tears, and sparkling bright with hope and joy in the midst of the darkest and the thickest cloud of sorrow and despair on his brow. The Heroism of Bhai Mani Singh, though occasionally manifesting itself in deeds of chivalry, was rather calm and silent peace of his mind, which did shed its steady light on his daily deeds. It was indeed something very heroic to have silenced forever the great passion of his own heart to keep in constant company with Guru Gobind Singh, and to have chosen a deathlike separation for life from him, for the sake of humbler duties falling to his lot. His heroism lighted every moment of his life and he bore the cross of his body in his own hands all his life. He was in the noon-tide of the spiritual sun of Sikhism, and completely wrapped up in robes of light, he was always absorbed in the shoreless sea of Bliss. He was an abstraction. O! the mysterious smile that played on his face and the child-like innocence of all his daily movement!

Peace and good will to all human beings flowed out of his consciousness as the moonlight circles round from the moon. Bhai Mani Singh lived in different spheres, then where the popular eye located him. We call him so and so, but he himself was entirely unconscious of his greatness.

In every face that greeted him he saw the image of his own thought—Guru Gobind Singh. Every sound was to him the divine speech of his Guru. Separated from him, it became his habit to see him in everything. To us, it was one world and to him the same appeared quite a different universe, where no duality could be seen.

His life shines like a star in the Sikh History, shedding its silent, beneficent, witness-light of a well disciplined and well spent daily life of a saint,

The above feeble account of his inner life—if we can ever dare touch the sacred precincts of that sanctuary of soul—is enough to place him in the forefront of the world's martyrs. His inner crucifixion was complete.

Such a life could not but be a source of blessing to the people, while yet beating in the body of man, but the tragic end of his earthly life was a greater blessing.

The life of the Panth was getting a little clouded. He, like the setting sun, dyed deep in his own blood the murky clouds into living flames of fire. The obstacles became the stepping stones.

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## CHAPTER III.

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### WORK AT AMRITSAR.

Bhai Mani Singh while at Amritsar was for many years busy in writing a new edition of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. His point of view was different, to have classical and learned arrangement of the *shabads* of different *rag*s of different [Gurus, under] their distinctive headings, explaining the purport, rather than the *rag* arrangement, as in the original. He prepared an index by which any one could see the thoughts and exhortations of the [Gurus on] a particular subject. This was his idea even while he was with Guru Gobind Singh, but he found time enough to execute it only at Amritsar. When this edition was complete, he presented this great fruit of his great labours, to the Khalsa in an open meeting. He explained to them the novel ingenious classification of all the Gurus' thoughts, on different departments of life.

The Khalsa [in their impetuous zeal, instead of appreciating Bhai Mani Singh's work, demanded sternly an explanation from him by stretching a metaphor of Guru Gobind Singh regarding Sri Guru Granth



Sahib who once had said that it was the body of the Gurus, and finally passed a cruel judgment on him. They sentenced him to have his body cut, joint by joint and limb by limb, as he had done with the body of their Gurus. The general mass of Sikhs assembled there declared that the body of the Granth Sahib was really the body of their Honoured Gurus as remarked by the Tenth Guru in his final utterances.

Bhai Mani Singh, of course, knew well the meaning of the metaphor used by his beloved teacher. He had personally associated with him more than any of them there. In Bhai Mani Singh who was so well-attuned to the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh, the latter's spirit dwelt more than in any of his judges, still the mystic mind of the learned Bhai saw in this judgment some better significance and in their voice heard some higher voice, and without arguing his case, pleaded guilty [to the] charge. While receiving this sentence of the Khalsa, he asked his congregation to grant him through their wishes fortitude and courage to pass through the ordeal safe in his faith, [and implored them to bear with him in his hour of trial.

Before we pass to the last scene of this saint's life, we have to mention another great literary work that he did at Amritsar. He collected all the available

compositions of Guru Gobind Singh ji and other poets who worked in his service and under his inspiration, and compiled them all into a beautiful work of heroic poetry, known under the name of Dasam Granth. But for his efforts and very minute siftings and researches, this precious inheritance would have been wholly lost to us.


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### THE LAST SCENE.

In the meantime a new Governor was put in charge of the Punjab, who hearing the ravaging onslaughts of the Sikhs and anecdotes of their rebellious spirit, issued strict orders against this blessed brotherhood. He prohibited the general meetings of the Sikhs. He refused them permission to hold their *Dewali* and *Baisakhi* festivals at Amritsar. He tried in all possible ways to curb their pride. Sikhs, in those days, were freely persecuted, tortured and killed. The Sikhs lacking resources scattered themselves in forests and sequestered jungles of the Punjab for their own safety and the safety of the brotherhood. If ever they came to cities they were caught, imprisoned and usually beheaded.

Bhai Mani Singh, however, held fast to his post at Amritsar undaunted and undismayed. His treatment even with Mussalmans was catholic and full of love. A man of his consciousness could not but be loved and revered by all. The Muhammadans recognised in him a great *Arif*—a transcendentalist—and he was an object of worship even to them.

Bhai Mani Singh was sending a part of the offering to Mai Sundran at Dehli. The balance was spent in keeping an open kitchen. He feasted all who came to Amritsar. But when the Sikhs were thus cut off from their temple, the funds ran short and for many a day the blessed kitchen was without provisions. In this crisis Bhai Mani Singh consulted some Muhammadan Sardars of Amritsar regarding his proposal of holding the fair with special permission, and with their consultation he sent up an application to the Governor praying for the permission to hold the *Dewali* fair that year in Hari Mandir. He thought that one successful Sikh festival would recoup his funds and help him a great deal in carrying on that charitable institution of free board to all pilgrims and guests and that it would be a means to bring the Sikhs together in one place.

 Receiving this application, the Governor thought that the Sikhs who were inaccessible would all attend this proposed fair and thus give the Government a very good occasion for a general massacre to put an end to them and save all botheration and trouble necessary in capturing them individually. Making some such treacherous plans in his mind, the Nawab gave the necessary permission and demanded Rs. 5,000 as the Government fee, which Bhai Mani Singh agreed to pay.

The treacherous plan of the Governor was to be secretly carried out. The disguised army was stationed at Amritsar with the purpose of a general massacre of the assembled Sikhs. The higher law could not permit this enormity. The secret leaked out and all the different groups of the Khalsa were informed of the danger ahead and consequently no Sikh appeared on the scene. Bhai Mani Singh was caught, persecuted and tortured in all possible ways, for the non-payment of Rs. 5,000, the contracted amount to the Government. He was produced, after having been harrassed in the lower Courts for a length of time, before the Governor of Lahore who asked him the reason for the non-payment of the Government dues. The Sikh saint, in his guileless accents frankly told




the Nawab that it was not fair for him to demand the sum for a contract the terms of which were first broken by him, by deputing armies to butcher the assembling Sikhs. No Sikh came. No fair was held. No offerings were received. No money was in the funds of Hari Mandir and therefore he could not pay the amount. He further remarked that if the Nawab were to allow the next *Baisakhi* fair and guarantee the safety of all the pilgrims, even then he would be ready to pay that sum again. Otherwise he pleaded that it was unjust for the Government to demand the money.

On this, the Court Qazi inflamed the Governor, by saying that the Bhai was the guide and leader of the Sikhs, who were in open rebellion against the Empire and his dailywork was to preach blasphemy and sedition and that <sup>so</sup> on his inability to pay the amount, the order of the code <sup>w</sup> was to kill him by cutting him inch by inch and joint by joint, with only one alternative for his safety and that of his embracing Islam. With his overpowering authority, this was urged on the Nawab and he was asked to show no mercy and give no quarters to such deadly foe of the Empire and of the true Religion.

Some of Bhai Mani Singh's friends were there, with a subscribed amount to pay off the Government demand


and rescue their revered leader, but Bhai Mani Singh prevented their design saying, "We have to pay nothing. As for the sentence passed on me, it is so ordained. [We must abide by the Higher Will which is, I see] clearly, at work, in this pronouncement of the Qazi. What is the use of saving a body that is to moulder into dust one day or the other, if it can serve as an instrument of the Higher Will to answer some deeper and more hidden purpose than what we can imagine. No, brother, let it go on. We have nothing to lose. It is all victory." Thus satisfying his comrades, Bhai Mani Singh went direct to the Nawab and said, "I am ready. Let your sentence be executed. Call your executioners sharp to cut my limbs and pray tell them to do it joint by joint."


The Nawab struck by the greatness of his prisoner thought to win him over to Islam and then made a long persuasive speech. He implored him to embrace Islam and in its reward he promised him wealth, prosperity, position, influence, the comforts of a rich family, and a beautiful wife and all earthly enjoyments that kingly power can command. The poor Nawab little knew that the saint before him was a mightier king from whose stores beauty borrowed its lustre, and joy borrowed its charm.

The Nawab's proposal deserved nothing but contempt and scorn from his royal prisoner. He was disappointed in his expectations and the executioners were ordered to take charge of Bhai Mani Singh and to cut him to pieces. 

Here Bhai Mani Singh uttered a sentence whose mystic significance only those understood who were on the same level of his spiritual enlightenment. "The more the sacrifice of the innocent men, the more rapid the fall of your Empire."

The tragic end of the great saint's earthly life had come. Mark his calm face, his patient heart, his glowing eyes, and his disinterested, indifferent witnessing of the scene, when this bloody instrument of the executioner was falling on his every joint in regular succession.

Outside the Musti Gate of Lahore, which so many times we pass in deep delirium of our small life, was enacted the scene of that dreadful cruelty. The walls of the Lahore Fort have seen the execution of Bhai Mani Singh and the Musti Gate is still in the same posture. Let us go and stand with throbbing hearts within those ancient walls and try to catch some faint echo of the past. 



At first inch by inch, the joints of the hands were cut. The hands being thus severed off, the elbows were thrown down. Then the arms were taken off from the shoulder. And mark, Bhai Mani Singh remains a witness just as some body witnesses the barber removing his nails. After this they stretched his feet and the executioners bit by bit, cut the bones of his feet and then the knee-joint was torn and finally the thighs were separated from the body.

All this time, the great *Brahmjnani* was in deep communion with his Higher Self and was chanting the sweet hymns of the beloved Sri Guru Nanak. A light shone on Bhai Mani Singh's face. His forehead was sparkling. His face wore a serene and calm expression. His eyes looked straight into the infinite. From his deep abstraction it seems his heart and mind were centred somewhere else.

Like Mansur and Shamas Tabrez, Bhai Mani Singh showed a total indifference to all physical conditions and demonstrated once more the fallacy of those who identify their soul with particular conditions and organised constitutions.

The people assembled there, both Hindus and Mussalmans, saw in that mental attitude of the saint, some-



thing infinitely powerful before which the excruciating pains and pangs and Death itself paled and trembled and vanished. Bhai Mani Singh in his last moments was forcibly guiding the Human Mind to the God-vision, to Immortality, to the Reality above the dreams and illusions of this world.

There one saw the real soul of Sikhism winging high and rising triumphant above the body and mind, above death and life. It was the Spiritual Victory over the Spirit of Evil.

As the limbs of Bhai Mani Singh were being cut, so the very same strokes simultaneously were knocking out the foundation of the Moghul Empire.

"Nature is bound to co-work with one who feels himself one with nature." This is the spiritual law of all miracles and of all hidden events of history which suddenly lead to victory and triumph.

Bhai Mani Singh was a deliberate oblation on the altar of the National Liberty. Does not Bhai Mani Singh teach the coming man how to win liberty and how by emancipating ourselves we give freedom to a whole nation for whose service all good Governments are conserved and organised. The Nawab in his ignorance ordered the execution and torture of such a saint

on whom the Lords of life attended and whom all powers of Nature befriended.

The poor Nawab knew not that by the execution of this saint, there would be a storm produced in his Kingdom, a storm in which their Empire would be blown away as a straw.

It was Bhai Mani Singh alone who fully understood the deep significance of this incident and was all the while blessing Nature for her loyalty to the Lord of Love. There were Muhammadan *faqirs* deep sighted enough who at once felt the great storm that was bound to blow and in its tornado blast annihilate the Moghul Empire. They hurried and made the Nawab repent of his folly in having mistaken Bhai Mani Singh for an ordinary man, but it was too late.

Aurangzeb had already beheaded Sarmad. He had shed the blood of Guru Teg Bahadur. The Nazim of Sirhind had buried alive the two innocent ones. Guru Gobind Singh had already prayed forth light and made visible all the enormities of the Moghul rule. Bhai Mani Singh willingly volunteered his body to see with his own eyes the complete fulfilment of the Guru's mission.

The hallowed memory of Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom should start the very dust of Lahore into life and the winds of heavens mixing sorrow and joy for us, should still ring in our ears his great message of Liberty, Freedom and Higher Life.

Let us claim the soil on which our forefathers shed their blood, as our own.

"O Sacred Dust of my country! Let me rub it on my forehead, eyelids, breast, and arms. Let this be my only dress," should be the idea filtering down the people's hearts.

Let us be baptised in the blood of our martyrs and thus get rid of our bigotry, meanness and vanity.

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# BHAI TARU SINGH, A SIKH FARMER.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE TEMPLE OF HEART.

Buddha might be too grand for everybody to understand, but his simple act of offering his own body to be shot in the place of an innocent gazelle sends a tremor in every heart. This little act adorns the human history with a never-to-be-forgotten lesson on compassion. The followers of a great hero are like the rays of the sun as so many thoughts of his own. They are inseparable from him. Their will is the hero's will. Their little acts are the expressions of the hero's mind.

If the dazzling grandeur of Guru Gobind Singh's genius is too transcendental a subject for the ordinary mind, let it dive deep into the little details of the daily life of his followers and try to conceive the lofty nature of the Teacher's Heart.



In this chapter we refer to the great inner victory that the Gurus had won in the Punjab over the hearts of the people. The powers of love had so intermingled and intermixed the being of the Gurus with their Sikhs into an indissoluble Unity, that it is difficult to say whether the latent ideals of the Punjab people had blossomed forth in their full perfection in the Gurus, or whether it were the Gurus who were divine visitors to this country and who established, by their own powers, a reign of love in the popular heart.

They reigned like the very self of men. The Gurus' Divinity was so real that every Sikh heart was its shrine, and the very sight of them made many fall on their knees in worship. The life of every true Sikh is a sort of antiquarian view of a Sikh temple, a living, moving, working temple of heart throbbing in concord with the great pulse of that large immortal Soul-life which flutters in birds, sparkles in waters, hisses in winds, roars in seas, shines in light, loves in heart, thinks in mind, and through eternity, Unchanging and Immutable abides for ever and ever.

The human hearts are the real pagodas, the golden lustre of which is the true light of religion. All those who take any interest in the spiritual joy of Nature will, casting aside all prejudices and party passions, we hope,

see, how inspiring is the effect of holy pilgrimage to the consecrated Temples, and being humane in their sympathies, will share the sacred associations of its votaries (however foreign they may be to them). We are confident that every one who thus attunes himself to the dear hearts of all people, would share the exaltation of the mind which follows when inner soul kisses in spontaneous worship the dearness of the place.

It must be some lesson in the education of the soul that the pure Hindus hail the sight of the Ganges and one dip in the sacred, limpid water bathes them in their ancient associations of purity and holiness. When the merest symbols, can prove to be so elevating, and think, then, how much more blissful must be a pilgrimage to a living temple of God, the human heart, whose inner glory all the temples of the east piled so high fail to manifest. Though the life of Bhai Taru Singh is not recorded in the general Indian history, yet his is a name which conjures up heroic deeds in the minds of the Sikh community.

There is a democracy in the spiritual life, which demolishes all distinctions of high and low. In small things, it sees the Infinite and Incomprehensible greatness and in great things it sees the same. It looks at the naked soul. Hence the Sikhs of to day revere with

equal honor the great historical events of the life of the Gurus, as well as the relatively obscure events in the daily life of the Gurus' adherents, which history tries to drop away from its memory, in obedience to the mystic message of Guru Gobind Singh, that the Khalsa Brotherhood was he Himself. Therefore to the Sikhs, all the deeds great or small done by the true Sikh however humble and lowly, are the incidents of the Guru's life and as such dearer to them than the greatest event in foreign history or the Indian History of another epoch.

From Guru Nanak as the centre, the expanding circle of the Khalsa knows no bounds and the ocean-like love of their creed makes the myriad Sikhs but one organic whole. History after all is a poor general record of the outer show and theatrical activity and does not keep any record of the silent life on the deeper levels of human society which alone in all times, has caused the greatest changes and revolutions on the surface of this earth. Hence, like other objects of this world, the visible body of history is only a small speck on the great invisible past. Our general History may forget the deed of a young man jumping in a river to rescue the drowning sister, or it may forget the bravery of a young Californian girl standing before a rushing train to signal with a red cloth a danger ahead, and it may not notice a

thousand little acts of philanthropy of hundreds of unpublished and unnamed Howards, Nightingales, Vidya-sagars, and it may not record the unknown lives of the invisible Buddhas, Christs and Shivas of the world, yet the genius of humanity is very jealous to preserve every little thing and its progress is the resultant of all these little events. "Virtue and vice emit breath every moment". There is absolutely no waste in Nature and every little vibration of the human heart or mind, is woven into the texture of the very genius of man, nay into the very constitution of Nature itself. Therefore it is that the Khalsa Panth of to-day can see quite vividly all the different scenes of the Khalsa History. There is an eye that can see the divine glow on the cheeks of Guru Gobind Singh's children standing in the Court of Sirhind, and there is an ear that can hear the bold accents in which they were declining all the honours of the world for the sake of loyalty to Truth. The same eye can see the azure colour of patience and resignation on their faces when they were being buried alive in the wall, with bricks being piled on their tender limbs with lime and mortar, as if the scene happened but a night ago before our eyes.

That grass is yet alive to us, on which Guru Gobind Singh after the battle of Chamkor walked barefooted and that mound of clay in the forest is still a holy place of



pilgrimage to us, where he took a short sleep after so many days' hard fight.

The stone with which Guru Nanak weighed his stuffs, while keeping a shop, are still our holy relies. And so, are dear and near to us, the lives of all the Sikhs. They are the precious thoughts of our mind, the noble traits of our character, the exalting piece of our being, the glory of our heart and the steel of our blood.

Some of the less-awakened in these days may forget the personalities, but the great past of the Khalsa Panth flows in their blood and lives in their mind. What matters it if they knowd it not. They breathe, see and hear without any conscious effort and they do not know many other things. With this brief introduction, which we hope will be rightly understood we proceed with our narrative of Bhai Taru Singh's brief sojourn on this earth.

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## CHAPTER V.

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Time rolls on. Many villages have mouldered into dust. Many more have been raised. We do not know, if a neat little house with a pretty courtyard is still in good condition, somewhere near the so-called Polla village situated in the interior *Majha*. We do not know, whether there is any one in that part of the country to-day, claiming some remote relation with a poor Sikh farmer that once lived there in perfect peace, bliss and contentment.

But all the same, that house is set in our memory like a gem. It derives its ruby lustre from our illustrious Hero, Bhai Taru Singh.

Bhai Taru Singh a youngman of 25 summers, owned a small piece of land in this village. His form was moulded in the beauty of goodness and faith. Every glance of his was brimful of Love to all human beings.

His flesh was magnetic over and over. He had a kind heart and a strong will.

With him, under the same roof lived his aged mother and his younger sister. These two ladies laboured side

by side with their dear one. He would raise corn. They would grind corn and do other sorts of miscellaneous labour to earn something in addition. All the fruits of their joint labours were dedicated to any who visited them. In those days, the Sikhs were under the Imperial ban as we have said. They were being hunted out one by one and put to death.

Prices were fixed for every Sikh head and liberal prizes were given to any who caught a Sikh alive for the state torture and punishment. Still the guerrilla-warfare was going on and the Sikhs concealing themselves in dense forests, would catch any opportunity to surprise the enemy by their sudden attacks. They would ransack villages, loot the government treasuries and pay the government in its own coin. These lion-hearted Sikhs subsisted in jungles on herbs and roots only. Only at times they had hearty meals.

Bhai Taru Singh thought of nothing else but serving this brotherhood. He had dedicated his body, heart and mind to this untaught service. The entire energy of his exuberant youth was being spent in the Panthic service and long before, he had decided not to marry. A perfect dedication his, sustained and supported by the tenderer emotions of the loving and consecrated feminine hearts of his mother and sister.

Their voice of love soothed the troubled hearts of the visiting guests and their smiling dedication of life to love, was a source of fresh inspiration to many. Every grain that his piece of land produced was set apart for the oppressed community, while the family managed to live on what the mother and daughter could earn by their hands.

The beauty of hospitality, only those can realise who, after a long journey in the desert go to quench their killing thirst in some lonely cottage where it is satisfied and a cool shade is given them for rest. Those who being benighted in the night, catch a glimpse of a far off tiny light of a flickering lamp on a distant and high mountain brow, scale those fatiguing heights, beaten by storms of wind and snow into the jaws of death itself, go and make a call on the door of somebody and are greeted with love, those alone can realise the real greatness of Hospitality.

Hospitality is a great gift of man to man and is the recognition of the one common soul of Humanity. It is the highest perfection of manners dictated not by fashion but by love.

All that belonged to Taru Singh was spent in hospitality and he never knew, if he had in fact, anything of



his own. He was so good and so true. Not only, his doors were ever open to the guests, but at time, he and his sister went deep into the lonely forests, to reach provisions to their brave but starving brethren.

The cheerful atmosphere of this neat Sikh Home, its inmates' cordial hospitality, and their warm love attracted every body.

Bhai Taru Singh's mother was mother to all and his sister was sister divine of every one indeed. Gradually, Bhai Taru Singh's home developed into a regular rendezvous of the Khalsa.

Like the good Bishop of D.—in the famous work of Victor Hugo the *Les Miserables*, these three good souls thought little of their own comforts. They lived on mere husks, a handful of oats and at times would go without meals, to save the maximum amount for helping their brothers.

Thrice blessed is that divine Idea, that can lift the ordinary and the uncultured humanity to the highest levels of Enlightenment and Civilisation which the greatest scholars try in vain to achieve.

In Bhai Taru Singh's home our readers can best study the wonderful influences of Sikhism.

On one side, in this world, we have the view of this Shining Nature of man all sincerity, all nobility, all perfume, all attraction and on the other side, we meet with the pitch dark, mean, malodorous, contemptible repulsive, little self of man working for small ends of greed and riches.

The species of spies and detectives is the most detestable part of a society, but there is no day without its night in this world. *Har Bhagat Niranjani*, a Hindu, was a government spy. He had sold himself to money, title, rank and government position and such puerile and paltry concerns. He was not a human being, but only a copper pice. This treacherous *Mahant* betrayed Bhai Taru Singh and reported the whole matter to the Lahore Governor. He charged the Saintly youngman with the crimes of feeding the rebels, thieves, and Sikh villains, and of giving them protection under his roof etc., and recommended him to the Nawab for an exemplary punishment. Accordingly, the Military Sowars were sent to the village of Bhai Taru Singh who, without much ado, offered himself for arrest.

On his way to Lahore many Sikhs came in a body and threatened the Sowars to rescue him with force

from their hand. But this fight was averted by Bhai Taru Singh himself

He prevailed upon them to desist from such an act. The noble young Sikh thought in his own mind that the worse that might happen to him, would be death. By his death, only one family would suffer and a family that has enough to live by and to serve others and did not depend so much upon him. The sufferings of his mother and sister would be comparatively less than the general sufferings of many Sikh families, who would be left destitute, if his friends then gave a battle to those government minions.

That Bhai Taru Singh did not think too much of himself is clear. He preferred his own death to the death of any other Sikh for his sake. This is the real grandeur of his greatness which he himself was not conscious of. Indeed, only those are truly great, who know not that they are so.

The Sikh brothers yielded to the request of Bhai Taru Singh and parted in great sorrow. The party reached Lahore and Bhai Taru Singh was kept in the lock-up for the night. On the following day, he was produced in the Court. It seems, Bhai Taru Singh was prepared for anything. As usual he shouted his own motto and

salutation of "*Sri Wahguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahguru Ji ki Fateh!*" which of course disturbed the Court like some winged serpent.

Bhai Taru Singh respectfully submitted that he was neither a high-way robber nor a thief but a poor farmer with a small piece of land to till and that he paid all the Government dues quite regularly, and then questioned the Nawab why he was harrassed and prosecuted for nothing. In reply, the Nawab charged him with rebellion against the government and asked his explanation as to why he gave shelter and food to the Sikh rebels.

To this, Bhai Taru Singh made a very sensible reply. He said they were, in his opinion, no rebels. They were his brothers in faith. It was no crime, if he opened his doors to them and entertained them by giving the legitimate fruits of his own labour, which he had every right to dispose of as he wished.

The Nawab enraged at this frank and bold reply of the young, intrepid Sikh, sentenced him, in his own arbitrary, despotic way to the bloodiest punishment of *charakhri*. This *charakhri* was a mincing machine of a particular design, which wheeled on the body of the culprit and flayed his flesh layer by layer.



Just after a few moments of this pronouncement, the dreadful *charakhri* was wheeling over the beautiful and strong body of our innocent martyr. While his skin was being peeled and his flesh was being scraped and minced, his steady and well-controlled mind was directed to the Guru's faith, and the tongue was kept busy in ejaculating "Akai, Akai!" "the Deathless one, the Deathless one!"

Seeing this wonderful fortitude and mysterious endurance of our young Hero, the Nawab, as was his wont, began to induce him to embrace Islam and escape from the dreadful torture. The process was delayed and the beloved Taru Singh was locked up in the dungeon again for the night. Next morning, the Nawab began with great promises of securing him ease and comfort, honey and milk of purple prosperity in the world, if he would only deign to embrace Islam. He alternated his sweet words with threats, but all in vain. The great and straight Taru Singh treated this wretched condescension with the characteristic royal scorn and contempt of his creed and the Nawab felt all the poorer in his presence. Again and again, the worthy hero was put on the *charakhri* and then brought before the Nawab for a similar dialogue. The Nawab came in person one day to witness the horrible scene of the wheeling *charakhri*, and in his heart of hearts could not

help admiring the real greatness of the man. But tyranny knows no mercy and bigotry allows no compassion. This time, the Nawab thought of making the conversion forcibly. He said very indignantly "O young Sikh! If you don't yield through love and persuasion to embrace Islam, I will forcibly convert you by cutting off your hair even by beating with shoes." At this, the tempest was produced in the calm sea of Bhai Taru Singh's heart. Intense indignation at this extreme moment compelled all the powers of mind to attend and they were at the service of the martyr.

What use are the powers of mind and Nature, if they do not serve on such occasions and receive benediction on their heads from such great lovers of God?

Bhai Taru Singh replied "O! Haughty Nawab. It is not in any power to remove my hair as long as I am breathing. Perhaps it would be the shoes of some Sikhs that you shall have to take on your head O Fool!" The high pitch of indignation of the concentrated mind of Bhai Taru Singh must have broken the heart of the Nawab and quelled his pride, but for the sake of prestige he gave orders to cut his hair with scissors and shave him. Scissors and razors, and other instruments were all used in vain. No instrument was sharp enough to go against the

will of our hero. It was impossible to remove the hair, but the skin of the skull was taken off altogether.



Jaded and tired of inflicting punishment on Bhai Taru Singh, the Nawab, after all, allowed some Hindus of Lahore to remove Taru Singh who by this time had fainted.



By a strange coincidence the Nawab fell ill on the very day. His kidneys would not work and he suffered from excruciating pains. Self condemned, he felt that it was due to Bhai Taru Singh's curse that he was in such an agony, as no medicine would work at all. He called Bhai Subeg Singh the only Sikh who was employed by the government as Peace-maker on some urgent occasions, and entrusted him with the message. The Nawab profusely apologised in his errand to Bhai Taru Singh and implored his forgiveness and mercy.

Bhai Taru Singh on being approached remarked ; "He has not offended me but the Guru himself. He has insulted the whole brotherhood. It is now the Panth that can forgive him. He will be relieved of his headache and colic if somebody strikes him on the crown of his head, with the shoes of a Sikh."

It is said, it did happen so\*. The Nawab expired

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\* It may be noted here that in India, it is regarded as a very great humiliation and disgrace to be beaten by shoes especially on the head.

in the same agony after a few days of the great martyr's death.

On his death bed Bhai Taru Singh was visited by many Sikhs. He greeted them with his smiles and blessed them all.

Though young in years, Bhai Taru Singh was revered by the whole brotherhood, for his great devotion to the Gurus, his great consecration to the service of the Panth and above all, he was almost worshipped for his saintly nature.

By his disappearance from the scenes of earth, a great star of Sikhism had gone and mingled itself with the Great Unknown.

The tyrant thought he had done away with him, but God in his mysterious way made him a star that still shines in the firmament of our mind.

For those of us who can not see these stars within, shall we not, like the ancients, select prominent stars in the sky and call them by the names of our beloved Heroes?

The touch of Bhai Taru Singh awakens us to our real life and rouses in us some associations which thrill the inanimate scenes of the past with life, and they become living Realities to us. It seems we were present



on the scenes, and talked with our beloved Hero. Midst the acutest physical suffering, he smiles on us who stand with drooping heads before him and with a thunder of "Akál, Akál!" makes us look up into the Infinite and makes us let go our grasp on the world, the life, the possession, the dear and near, and the all.

He whose body was reduced to a pool of blood and a few loosened and broken bones swimming in it, shows by his non-attachment with the body, with a blissful expression of his face, a higher joy, a sweeter intoxication right here, which the fools of the world can not at all understand. How true it is "Death in Life" is the highest and the profoundest expression of Love Divine. Such was a Sikh farmer.

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# BEAI MAHAN SINGH.

## A SIKH SOLDIER.

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### CHAPTER VI.

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#### THE TEACHER.

LOVE magnetises the human flesh. It moulds it into myriad shapes. Beauty is but a thought of love. The more the light of love shines in one's heart, the more radiant becomes his flesh, the more charming his expression and the more graceful his features. The moon light sparkles on his forehead indeed. The beauty increases hundredfold. The eyes of the lover flash messages of deeper levels of soul. The wholly absorbed one is the focus of all hearts. On him, all swarm like the bees on the honey. To him all journey, like the thirsty animal of the forest to the fountain. In him, all lose themselves in the fiery beauty of the flame. When such a one comes in an unfamiliar town and seeks an obscure corner and tries to hide himself, he cannot. People flock to him. For his lecture, on advertisements are needed.

Every one of us in spite of himself is more or less lost in beauty, in love, in light. But our petty love-makings with their puny sacrifices and little concessions are transient jokes of life, [which we flatter ourselves to make much of. Only now and then, these little flitting dreams of ours, give birth to grander things and we make and spread some Golden stories of *Shirin and Farhad*, and of *Leili and Majnun*, of *Romeo and Juliet*. In these fictions we rise a little higher into the beautiful realms of love. But to most of us in them also, it is the sex that thrills and not the reality. We lose the whole of the story in the contemplation of an outward appearance of some character in the plot.

We miss the soul of Love "that Roseate] Dandy which blushes on the cheeks of the beloved on one side and bleeds in the heart of the lover, on the other,"

In the display of life, perhaps love is the only reality and the distinction between the lover and the beloved, like the light and shade of a landscape painting, is only optical. When we act the drama of Love, in spite of our knowledge our ego, the dearness of the so-called life, drops away from us.

Let the beautiful eye of the smiling Love but wave the signal and the lover would jump in the sea, would

roll in fire, would march in rain of bullets and would dare stand under the smiting blades of steel, with a happy zeal and perfect joy. It seems, he dies in his body long before his resurrection in Love. Indeed, the true life of a lover is elsewhere.

All the same, we live in fragments and fractions. We are enamoured of an eye and we die. We are charmed by a ruby lip and we are no more. The fascination of a perfuming youth, a beckoning hand, a gentle coo, an artful gait, and an inviting smile is where we transfer our being.

We do not care to look at the very soul which calls us, under all these different guises. But from here, somebody is to awaken us and we have progressed enough to be lifted higher to Love itself, to soul itself—the centre of all attraction, the Cause of All Beauty, the Meaning of all expression, the Store of all joy.

It does happen so and the merest chance brings us face to face with a Buddha, a Krishna, a Jesus, a Muhammad, a Shankar, a Tabrez, a Nanak, a Chaitanya, a Gobind Singh, a Rama, who though seeming to be nothing but human beings, are in reality, some allotropic forms of Light and Love. They at times manifest so much power, as if on High Himalayas, a torrent of lightning has fallen pulverising it into dust,



and on other occasions, they show so much tenderness, as if they are purple clouds who drizzle mildly and sweetly as raining dew on lilies, violets and roses.

With such ones, we fly and float unconscious and senseless, and thus live the highest. Finding them, we gladly turn our back on all earths and Heavens. Finding them we feel safe and secure on the changing sands of time. Finding them we are consoled and we bless our existence. In their presence our past actions do not stand to condemn us. When Mary Magdalene stood before Jesus Christ, none knew, but her past life was only to set off her future in brighter light and in intenser colours. The sight of the master was enough vindication of all the so-called Sins. We never sin. In the upward march of evolution to the presence of *Jagat Gurus*—the Teachers of Man—our every sin appears in the light of this final event a divine dispensation. Mary Magdalene that now is, is the inspirer of all humanity with higher ideals of love and devotion. It seems these Gurus—these Teachers, by their one look, make our soul soar far far away into some higher attitudes of which we can have absolutely no idea without them.

Such, then, are the Teachers. To be so fortunate as to touch their dress, to see them, to talk with them is indeed the fruition of all life.

It is *jiwan mukti* right here in life, the highest attitude, the final purpose of the *Prana*.

"The journey ends and reached is goal,

For this the Universe did roll."

The human mind dares to reject a man and dares to defy him, if it can find its limits. No teacher can have the world's homage who cannot lead the human mind to a vision of the Limitless, the Shoreless, the Infinite, above his own body and mind and whose very sight does not suggest the Infinity of his Inner Nature and Self. None, be he a sceptic, a materialist or anything, can resist the influence of such a Real man whenever discovered and cannot but lose his logic and intellect in him. The greatness is offered as an oblation on his altar. The fame on earth or in heaven is burnt in him.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## BHAI MAHAN SINGH.

Guru Gobind Singh was the divine genius of the Punjab. He was a great Teacher and Liberator of Man. In him, the Punjab was lost. His followers though usually clad in rags and called *faqirs* and ascetics, are the only true monarchs of the universe as they hold their sway on the heart of everybody eye of the mightiest potentates. Was he the beloved of the People or the People his beloved? As we have already remarked the lover and the beloved seem only a conventional duality of the real unity and they interchange office at random.

Hundreds and thousands died on the battlefield we will say, in his love. No doubt, the larger interests of humanity moved this Prince of Love to the active field of war, but the only motive that impelled the majority of his followers, was their Love of the man Gobind Singh.

With so much love on both sides, it seems cruel that on one occasion, some forty disciples of his willingly deserted Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur, because he would not listen to their proposal of evacuating the fort.

This incident is the same intensifying Art of Love which played with Jesus in the false kiss of Judas. It was the same art, with which Love cunningly played, with Miranbai in sending her cobras and poison-cups. It is only the absence of Love for just a twinkling to increase the interest some thousandfold more.

After being deserted, Guru Gobind Singh got a written document from them cutting all ties and severing all bonds of faith and loyalty towards him. The reader knows after what great privations suffered by the great Guru and his disciples, he accepted the terms of the enemy and evacuated the fort. How treacherously the enemy pursued him. He had to fight with the odds in the open fields and he lost many of his faithful heroes, who though starving, fought desperately with a religious enthusiasm all their own. He gave another battle at Chamkor where he lost his two sons and all his remaining followers. But Guru Gobind Singh was not born to be daunted by defeat or elated by victory. To him, these were the ordinary games of life and he took them, turn by turn, for what they were worth. He was left alone and he managed to escape unscathed.

Disguised and unnoticed many a day he walked in the Jungles. Many a night he slept on the green grass with his head resting on stones but dreaming still of



His People's Liberty. His noble mien, his royal cut of features, his divine glow, and above all the soft radiance of his Universal Love aroused in any that saw him feelings of reverence and devotion. On one critical occasion, he was in the centre surrounded by his enemies and there seemed no way of escape. When a Mussalman family disguised him as a faqir of their faith in the sky coloured garments and bore him away in a palanquin safe from amidst the Imperial army. There is something pathetic in seeing Guru Gobind Singh wearing rough, blue rags!

After long journeys and various vicissitudes, Guru Gobind Singh reached Malwa where his scattered Sikhs rallied round him and preparations were set forth for fresh battle.

Those forty deserters, were naturally, after a short time, stricken with pain and anguish at their cowardice of having given up the Guru in a time of need. Their mothers and their wives, their kith and kin, all looked down upon them. But the criticism that comes from outside, only condemns and pricks, but never raises. The remorse that wringing the soul in agony moves it to greater deeds is always felt, like a smarting pain from within. They were like broken mariners who had willingly lost their

own boat. Thrown into the sea at midnight, they were trying to catch every little rising wave of the world to sit and rest, but such seeming terra firma, on every effort, slipped off from below their feet.

All day was midnight to them as they were now feeling their separation from their Love. They had, by their own act, raised a black mountain between, shutting the light of Love that flamed to them from their Guru. Those forty wandered for some days like eclipsed black moons. They were wrapped in the dreary night of the soul. Their greatest anguish and pain was this.

They prayed to their Love again. They invoked their Love again. They thought of their Love again.

There was a good chance of shining brighter than ever before and of pleasing the Guru.

The Imperial forces were headed by the Nazam of Sirhand who having heard that Guru Gobind Singh was preparing for war, marched in person to the scene of combat in Malwa near Dehlwan.

The Guru's forces were stationed well. The only pool of drinking water in the wide desert was in his possession. The Sikhs had built a very strong defence around it.

This band of forty, without giving notice of their arrival to the Guru, attacked the advancing Nawab, from a very strategic point and produced great confusion in the ranks of his army. The power that comes to the feeblest muscles in moments of such acute mental states came hundred-fold more to these determined martyrs because that was the time to accomplish the end all and be all of their earthly and heavenly life which was to be with the Guru again on the same terms as before. They fell upon the enemy, like roaring lightnings, with their naked swords waving high, and their thundering ejaculations of "Akál Akál." Though they all fell dead, yet they had knocked out the very backbone of the Imperial army which, advancing a little further, made repeated efforts to capture the pool of water for quenching their thirst but were repeatedly repulsed. Hundreds died of thirst and thousands were killed by the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh's disciples then made a general attack on the baffled army of the enemy and the spiritual enthusiasm of the Guru's followers gave a complete and crushing defeat to the Nawab whom they pursued for a long distance.

Then the victorious and the loving General searched the field personally and raised up one by one his fallen heroes, and blessed them with all the affection of his broad and tender heart.

At last the parted ones met, Guru Gobind Singh came to the very spot where those forty disciples of his were lying wounded and dead. Will none of them open his eyes to see the object that they had longed to see? Will none enjoy any more the presence of the Guru, the Teacher, the General and the Commander? Will none of them speak to express their now silent wish of Union with their beloved and will none vindicate their ardent devotion to their Love?

Guru Gobind Singh suddenly recognised them and with tears in his eyes, he was raising one by one, caressing the dead bodies and blessing their faith.

He paid loving tributes to the memory of each and all and seemed to have been moved more by this strangely tragic incident in his life, than any that happened to him, ever before or after. Did he feel the wish for the fulfillment of which all of them died so well? Most probably he did,

On the battle field of Muktsar, where thousands of corpses of the soldiers were lying in pools of blood, Guru Gobind Singh the Teacher and the General was bending with great affection to one in whose pulse he had seen some faint traces of life. He was looking at his face which was enjoying a deep sleep. The eyes were



closed, Guru Gobind Singh looked steadfastly at him and lo! the eyes of the dying soldier opened and whom do they see but their beloved Guru the Teacher, the Light of their soul?

It was a strange meeting. The beloved one was kneeling down, to nurse the lover. The moth in its desperate attempts to reach the light had fallen dead and Love had driven the very flame to kiss life into it. The *chikor* (partridge) tired of flying and flying, fell down from the high skies and the moon had come down to fulfil his intense desire.

The scene is also characteristic of the spiritual Democracy that existed between the Teacher, the Guru and his disciples. It was a scene characteristic of the spiritual constitution of the Khalsa Republic. The Guru saw in them his love and they in return saw love nowhere but in him. While they marvelled at his sight, he marvelled at theirs. They wondered at each other. Indeed what greater gift can God or Nature bestow on Man, than when his beloved is ready to give all to him.

The Sikhs were the beloved of the Guru and the Guru was their beloved and here was a complete mutual surrender of each other to each other.

The glances of the dying soldier and Guru Gobind Singh met. This was a meeting of souls. There could be no higher joy in store for Bhai Mahan Singh, our chosen hero of Muktsar. But not only glance-exchanging. Guru Gobind Singh offered everything temporal and spiritual when he said to him in gentle, soft accents, "O dear blessed one ! Is there any hope in your breast unfulfilled, any wish lingering still, anything left undone. Say, it shall be given to you."

Here again, we see the spirit of Great Renunciation characteristic of the Religion of the Gurus. Bhai Mahan Singh turns his back on all earths and heavens. Nay he gives up the idea of his own spiritual Bliss and Salvation.

The joys of man grow and increase hundred-fold and become intenser as the man rises from the lower physical to the higher spiritual planes of consciousness. For him, it is not a question of renouncing of the lower but of greater attachment to the really greater and intenser joys of life. Hence the Renunciation of the best possession of one's own state of thought is his highest charity.

It is comparatively easier to renounce a cup of water in favour of a dying soldier, than to renounce the

love of a lady for the sake of another pining for her. Still higher as we go, it grows proportionately more difficult to renounce the greater joys of soul for the sake of others. Hence the greatest renunciation is of a Buddha—the Enlightened one—who, renouncing the highest Heaven of joy, roams like a homeless *Bikkshu* sharing the sorrows and sufferings of others.

From this standpoint, the self-sacrifice of Bhai Mahan Singh is unique in History. He was in the presence of his Love. It was the greatest passion of his life to remain so. He could ask this highest bliss for himself. He could ask a longer life for himself to live in the constant presence of His Teacher.

But we wrongly see the great Martyr. His self was not a local self, which demands only an individual salvation.

What did he ask then? What did he wish? He implored the Guru to forgive them their great fault of having deserted him. He pointed to his other comrades lying cold and said, they were mute and silent then and he had to speak for them and not for himself.

He implored the Guru to tear before his eyes that self-condemning wretched document signed by them at Anandpur, by which they were disinherited of all the

pleasures and glories of the Khalsa Republic. Thus erasing the last traces of that separation, he entreated the Lord of Love to deign as to embrace them again into the loving arms of his faith.

Guru Gobind Singh was struck with this great sign of the great expansion of the self of his disciple and he took out the document from his pocket and tore it before his eyes then and there. He blessed him and all the rest, saying—

“Dhan Sikhi

Dhan Sikhi

Dhan Sikhi.”

These were the only words that the dying one heard. They fell like divine benediction on him and all.

Guru Gobind Singh assured Bhai Mahan Singh with fond love of the fundamental Unity between himself and his followers, and pointed out to the Great Love in whom they were all united for ever.

This completed the circuit. The eyes of Bhai Mahan Singh closed for ever.



It seemed, as if the forty different islands flew up drawn by the continent and were main-land again. It seemed that some forty stars that had gone out into space, by the centrifugal forces, did shoot themselves again into their sun, with a beauty and splendour all their own.

At the signal from the Guru, the Teacher, the Master, the Lord, the dew drops just slipped into the shining ocean.

# BHAI SUBEG SINGH AND SOBAJ SINGH.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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### PRELIMINARY.

THE Muhammadan rulers of latter day had grown very intolerant even of goodness that could not be called Moslem in form. We have said in previous essays how the Governor of Lahore prosecuted the brave Sikhs who were carrying on a guerrela warfare with the powers ! The endless torture that the Sikhs suffered at the hands of the then rulers, would always remain in the annals of the Punjab, a lasting monument to the wonderful consciousness of the Immortality of Soul, that the realisation of the Sikh Gurus brought in the land.

The Sikh life shining like pure gold and coming triumphant out of all furnaces of persecution and adversity, and especially the traits of its real character as it displayed in the latter period of the Moghul Empire are indeed that rare

phenomenon of the victory of the spirit over matter, of the Unseen over the Seen, of faith in the Immortality of Soul over the epicurean, realistic atheism, which cannot but infuse a nobler blood in the race, give a higher and a larger meaning to the breaths of life, and lift up men and races from their grovelling, sensual meanness and ignoble moral cowardice to the sunlit heights of bold manliness scorning ease and comfort, finding all joy in combats with mountains and lions, buffeting with seas and volcanoes, daring deaths and dangers, hazarding life and all with a cheerful smile, on to victory and honour. People that do not boldly come forward to lose their life, which is surely one day or the other to pass away like a dream and can never be called one's own, are fit for being enslaved, whipped, hanged and lost. When they, after accumulating enough wealth and power, fall a prey to nervous diseases called luxury, indolence and ease, there comes an attachment with the unreal, the national consciousness falls, the mind contracts, the virtues depart and immediate ruin becomes inevitable. That philosophy and Religion which brings back fearlessness, non-attachment with the mortal, proves to be the promethean spark for rekindling the dying embers of the decaying people. Once in history did the Sikh Gurus succeed in rekindling the flame of life of the Punjab. The Sikh life to me is the index of the greatness of the Sikh Gurus. The whole of the Punjab must

feel greatly indebted to all those Sikh martyrs who have taught us in the indelible ink of their blood, the great lesson of the Immortality of the Real and the consequent worthlessness of the unreal.

Therefore loyalty to Truth, fidelity to Righteousness, all passion for the higher, the nobler, the manlier life !

All love and devotion for the greatness that lights the path !

All honor and homage to the silent eloquence of Life that teaches.

All heroes, all great men that have lived the Truth are every body's own. More his who can imbibe their spirit in his own character. Irrespective of the source from where the light flows, we may always let our eyes see. So the mind, if it is let open to receive all light that is rushing in from all four directions, may always know.

The Sikh life as is depicted in the previous essays and in the following concluding short anecdote, is indeed shedding a lustre of soul, which should throw rays of illumination on any man, provided no blinds of sectarian exclusiveness bar their way and shut them out.



I do not mean to expose the oppression of the Moghuls. I do not mean to emphasise any of the cruel deeds perpetrated by unconscious tools of nature in the name of sacred Islam, but it is my desire to bring out a soul luminous, a faith refulgent, and a belief glorious, which cares not for death, torture, elemental furies, and which under all circumstances gives, even in the physical frame, the proofs of its immortal Majesty.

In all my essays on Sikhism, I have seen the oppression as nothing but the doings of a Divine Power whose unconscious instruments were those whom the world is treating so uncharitably.

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## BHAI SUBEG SINGH AND SUBAJ SINGH.

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Bhai Subeg Singh belonged to the family of court ministers. His ancestors followed literary professions and his family was much honoured by the ruling Government. While still young, Bhai Subeg Singh was taken in the Imperial Service and was soon a Court Minister of the Lahore Governor. He had received a regular training in Persian and had mastered the Punjabi literature by self exertion. Bhai Subeg Singh was proving all along very serviceable to his employees. Often disputes

arose between the Governor and the Sikh Community which were always settled through the medium of Bhai Subeg Singh. He was the trusted of both the parties. A true Sikh with all the fervour of Guru's faith and with a heart all devotion to the Sikh Community, he could not but be honored by his co-religionists who knew of his transparent sincerity, his unbending sense of duty, his singleness of purpose and recognised in him a fellow brother of sterling worth who could be relied on for all purposes concerning the welfare of the Sikh Community. In this world, there is all suspicion and mistrust. It is all spies and detectives who are hiding under every little bush to waylay the unwary passer by and make a short work of him for their own little purposes; there men who would, for their own little ends of lucre and luxury, lead races, through treachery and deception, to the abyss of total desolation and complete ruin. Even in such a miserable world as this, there were, are and shall be men like Bhai Subeg Singh, whose very looks, very presence, would dislodge all mistrust from the innermost recesses of human heart and who, by virtue of their inner luminosity, would readily win the affection of all who see them. Bhai Subeg Singh was an open-petalled heart, the only thing which could be seen by every one. His inside and outside were but one continuous glow of his love. He was not only trusted by the people, but he enjoyed the fullest confidence of the

Government. He had done signal services to the Empire. He was selected to convey to the Sikh Community the best wishes of Muhammad Shah the Emperor of Delhi, together with the Investiture which His Majesty awarded to the Sikh Community. It was he who brought about peace between the suffering Nawab and the persecuted Taru Singh. He led his life in a very peaceful, loyal, and honourable service to the state. Little did Bhai Subeg Singh know that the very state whom he was serving so faithfully would turn against him at the slightest pretext and make a horrible tragedy of his last days, quite like Sir Thomas Moore who remembered his God on the scaffold to which he was led by the service of the king in which his head had grown grey.

The little incident that happened was the merest trifle, but the head of the Moslem Qazis was so much turned in those days, that they thought all non-Moslems to be no more than flies and mosquitoes, to take whose life was merest nothing to them.

Bhai Subeg Singh had a very handsome, tall, stalwart young son, called by the name of Bhai Subaj Singh. As usual with their family, Bhai Subaj Singh was put to learn Persian and Arabic, under Moslem teacher in the mosque. Once, while Bhai Subaj

Singh was eighteen years of age, and was about to finish his student career, he fell into a hot discussion with his class fellows who were of course Moslems by religion. As is the nature of every religious controversy, it assumed an unpleasant character. The discussion was carried to the Maulvi, the teacher and there too, Bhai Subaj Singh, with all the fervour of his youth, with all noble fire of faith spoke in favour of his own. This behaviour enraged the teacher. There are moments, when all is put to stake unknowingly for the mere expression of a sacred thought, a hidden sentiment regarded as the unseen principle of life by its votary. However inadequate may the expressions be, the tongue must speak and all considerations must be put aside, for what little manifestation it can give to the mysterious secrecy within.

Bhai Subaj Singh had now uttered out the sentiment which he might have withheld in other moments of wordly prudence. But not then. He was inspired by the sight of his dear soul-vision and he was speaking then like a prophet while others were merely talking.

The age was densely ignorant, consequently he must suffer.



The case was taken to the Nawab. The Qazi passed the sentence of the Moslem Code. Either Bhai Subaj Singh should embrace Islam, or suffer death. The Qazi's verdict must be carried out. It was always final. In this case especially, as the criminal was a Sikh.

The Nawab thought that his faithful employee Bhai Subeg Singh would easily see the sublimity of the Prophet's creed, as he knew Persian and Arabic and the father accepting Islam, the son would naturally follow suit. He thought it very easy.

So he called Bhai Subeg Singh and Subaj Singh and passed the orders "either accept the Prophet's faith or die."

The Nawab was really disappointed, when the following reply leapt out like a darting flame from the heart of Bhai Subeg Singh:—

"We are Sikhs. We hold the Sikh faith. Think us no cowards that we will renounce the shining gold of faith for the glittering sham of the worldly enjoyments. If death were never to visit us after we accept your faith, then of course it may be worth while. But the things that are by nature transient and perishing, cannot be relied upon. These bodies have to go once, to-day

or tomorrow. Therefore we fear no death for them. It is idle to try to save them. Blessed is this moment that we too shall have the fortune of being persecuted for the sake of our faith. Blessed is your order that would offer these bodies as oblations to the Guru's faith and thrice blessed these bodies, if they are chosen to bear such a testimony to the Truth of our religion.

"Blessed be that peeling wheel, the *charkhari* which would strip us of our skin, and dismember our limbs, riding on which, we shall say for the first time 'Akál ! Akál !' "The Deathless one ! The Death less one !" and realise all its glory.

"O Nawab ! You will find no cowards in us." We are the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, and we will follow in the footsteps of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Taru Singh and others."

Hearing this unexpected reply, the Nawab got still more enraged, as for the first time in his life he realised that Bhai Subeg Singh in his heart was a true and noble Sikh like others of his society and not merely a latitudinarian as he had thought him till then.

He confirmed his orders of the severest punishment of the *charkhari* for the son and his father. In a

few moments, the executioners were doing their horrible work. A long bearded, hoary headed elderly man who had spent all his life in Moghul service, was being rewarded by the fatal *charakhri* going round and mincing his flesh, breaking his limbs and grinding down with an awful force his giant skeleton to a pulpy mass. Besides the old father who in such extreme agony was reciting "Akal" "Akal" whose consciousness was illuminating his face and eyes, which were looking heavenward and were manifesting signs of a victorious spirit trying to soar far away into the realms of the blessed, spurning this earth of endless misery; a similar wheel was peeling and mincing, bruising and breaking the skeleton of the young son Bhai Subaj Singh whose fresh, warm blood was gushing out in little streams reddening the floor.

The Nawab heard the unparalleled valour of the two Sikh martyrs. He after half an hour of slow torture, summoned them again and tried to tempt the brave fellows into the moslem fold by all sorts of promises. The Nawab knew not how useless was his appeal. He was all body, his consciousness was a little mechanical motion of the nerves, and they were all spirit, their consciousness was the conscious God Himself. He was addressing the soul and appealing to it in the name of bodily pleasures. Nothing but

scorn and contempt is the only reply that is meted out to these appeals on all such occasions.

This time, the son Bhai Subaj Singh was taken apart, to a place away from the father and the father to the same place back again. The merciless wheel went on. Not satisfied, the heartless persecutors it is said, made the young Bhai Subaj Singh hang upside down and began to whip him, and worse still, burn his naked and bruised body with red hot iron sticks. Such inhuman punishment was not carried very far, when Bhai Subaj Singh asked for the release on the proposed condition of accepting Islam. At once he was taken to the Court on a conveyance and the welcome news of his promise was imparted to the Nawab. The triumphant Nawab, called the father and said exultantly that after all his son had consented, and that he being old had gone insane preferring to suffer so much for nothing, while his son saw his mistake and would be soon comfortable with the best of Mughal *Harems*. Hearing this one glance of the father was enough to brace up the courage of the boy, who had faltered but a little under excruciating circumstances which had before him made men even like Christ cry out:—

“Father ! Hast Thou forsaken me.”



Bhai Subeg Singh said a few words to encourage his son for the Renunciation of his body as merest nothing before the immense spiritual gain that was to be his "It is not yours. The body is one day to be consumed by the flames of fire. Courage! My son, Courage! Falter not. Have faith, all will be well. Renounce the body cheerfully for the sake of that religion, which counts among its martyrs no less personages than Guru Arjan, Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and all his four sons and hosts of other Sikhs."

Here the Nawab stopped him abruptly, thinking his words would again mislead the boy. But what little Bhai Subeg Singh could say in this short time had already done its work and Bhai Subaj Singh at once got up renouncing all cheerfully at the altar of Love, he said "Take my body. Burn it, burn it. Cut it bit by bit. I have nothing to do with it. It is not mine. Let it go as an oblation to the Sikh faith. I am determined to die rather than be a moslem."

Hearing this, the Nawab got furious and he made his previous orders more severe. The tortures were resumed, till both of them fell senseless. They were removed in that condition to the jail where they died, the son going first and the father following him in the flight of the blessed soul.

God is real, dear reader! These men who died on the *Charkhari* so cheerfully ejaculating "Akâl" "Akâl" were seeing the Great Immortality, as thou seest the overhanging blue sky all around you. All differences are in the mind! Change your thoughts and you are a new man.

Have faith! Live in God! This is the lesson that martyrdom teaches.

# BHAI MATAB SINGH, THE SIKH CHIEF.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### THE TEMPLE.

To an oriental nothing is more sacred than the place where he worships. The Hindu temple has a very interesting history. The whole of India is studded with very magnificent temples. The most beautiful scenes of *Uttarakhand* in the Himalayas are adorned with a temple. This temple thrills and fills the surrounding atmosphere with purity. The music of the solitary bell hanging on the head of sculptured *Shiva* sends forth with its undulations a life and a sanctity to enjoy which the Hindu undertakes long pilgrimage from the distant Comarin in the southern most of India to *Badri ka ashram* the northern most point, barefooted, almost like an ascetic, muttering meditatively some sacred name of God. His heart is all a consecration. Its throbs have the same concord and harmony as the

beats of the little bell of the temple. This pilgrim too is a centre of similar radiations of life and sanctity. His ardour, sincerity, placid calm, persevering devotion all make him as solemn as the sight of this sacred temple in the thick forests of Himalayas which forms a glorious emblem of the consecration of the Nature's scenery to the great God and declares His glory. The temple for Hindu has a higher meaning still. As the pilgrim approaches his sacred destination, his own little heart seems to beat very faintly, till its throb is lost in the vibrations of the sacred bell. The devout pilgrim has reached the temple and lying almost dead with love there he lies buried in God. The true Hindu lives more in the temple, than in the little human heart.

The peculiar architecture of a Hindu temple makes it an emblem of the human heart. The stone has its hardness, but not the vices of the impure heart. It has purity, sincerity, and awful sanctity all its own. Those that suffer from anger, lust, heated passions, let them touch their hearts with the cool, cool stone, nay, let them replace the former with the latter, and they will be purer, nobler, manlier men !

While walking on the Himalayas, and scaling some steep ascents, I clutched at plants to climb and got at times, a handful of moist clay. I saw it and



felt it. It was so pure, fragrant and moreover,"its touch so ennobling that I actually thought that if men had that clay in their hearts, they would do better. So the moist clay of the mountain, the stones lying in Ganges or in Mandirs being bathed constantly by ceaseless dripping of water and in Hindu temples the fragrance of flowers, the ringing of the bell &c., have a deeper Psychological meaning than what seems. At deeper levels of actual life, the inanimate nature grows animate and wields a wonderful influence on the life of man.

Hence the temple is so sacred to the Hindu. It is his better heart, the one that beats in tune with Nature and God.

This Hindu idea has spread remarkably in other countries. The Mosques and the churches are altered editions of the same.

Seeing through the genius of Hindus, the Sikh Gurus thought to build a sacred shrine as the central heart, the better heart, of the Sikh Brotherhood. It was the fourth Guru, Guru Rama Das, that first began the building of the Amritsar golden temple. Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, completed it and lived in it.

Since then, the Golden Temple has been to the Sikhs a sacred place of pilgrimage.

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## BHAJ MATAB SINGH, MIRANKOTIA.

OUR readers know from the life of Bhai Mani Singh, how ably he kept the charge of this sacred temple. But after Bhai Mani Singh was gone and martyred for the sake of his faith, the Sikh temple was forcibly taken by the *Ranghars* and Massa *Ranghar*, the Chief of this tribe, possessed the *Mandir*. No Sikh was allowed to enter. He spoiled the original purity of Hari Mandir by holding land and unholy meetings of luxury and worldly enjoyments. Sitting there he would indulge in the pleasure of drinking wine and listening to unholy music from female songsters, to excite the lustful passions of his heart.

As we have said above, Sikhs were in disfavour and they were almost hunted like animals and tortured to death. Sikh for their own safety were hiding in the jungles of Malwa and Rajputana and living in scattered groups.

Bhai Bulaqa Singh, a Sikh from the Punjab, having gathered all information regarding the sacrilegious practices of Massa *Ranghar* in the sacred Hari Mandir of Amritsar, made his way to Rajputana. The hardships of travelling in Rajputana on foot can well be imagined. The scorching sun over head, the burning sand under

foot and the waterless tracts stretching in seemingly limitless expanse before, but with all this, the brave Bulaqa Singh fainting here and resting there marched on, till he succeeded in reaching the dwelling of a brother sikh. He dropped with him for the night and then both went together into the jungle, where a few Sikhs were holding their meeting, *Diwan* as they call it. After the prayers were over, Bhai Budha Singh, the leader of that group, seeing the newly arrived brother from the Punjab, inquired of him about affairs of their mother province, when Bhai Bulaqa Singh made an eloquent speech relating the misdeeds of Massa Ranghar and his evil practices in the very heart of their sacred Mandir, in heart-burning words which were leaping out like flames from his feeling heart.

Hearing the heart-rending accounts of the Sikh Mandir, all present glowed with indignation.

Taking their swords in their hands, all of them pledged to redeem the honour and sanctity of Hari Mandir any how.

Midst these Sikhs there was the famous and the brave Bhai Matab Singh whose indignation knew no bounds, and he angrily asked Bhai Bulaqa Singh, how he could breathe as a true Sikh seeing such an enormity and whether all Sikhs in the Punjab were dead?

Bhai Bulaga Singh replied that the terrible persecution had driven the Sikhs out of the Punjab and all had fled to different directions for self-preservation. He pointed out the example of all those who had left their lands, houses and families behind to save themselves. He deplored that there were no true Sikhs in the Punjab then who could make their stand boldly against the fearful odds and the terrible power of the foes, finally he called all of them no sikhs but merely coward jackals calling themselves the lions or *singhas* who had not the prowess of the latter's spirit.

Hearing this appeal Bhai Matab Singh burst forth like a volcano. He could no more contain himself. He waved his sword and asked his brothers to pray for the success of his enterprise. Bhai Matab Singh's resolution was unshakably firm. Seeing this Bhai Sukha Singh another brave Sikh got up and pledged his life also before the *Dewan*, for the task. Prayers were offered and both started on their journey on horse back and while nearing Amritsar they filled their purses with small circular pieces of broken-pottery, make a show of offering, before they could get entrance to Hari Mandir.



As they reached their sacred temple, they fastened their horses outside the temple and prayed *Akalpurkh* for His support in fulfilling the mission, and with filled purses in their hands, they went in. Here all what they had heard till then, they saw with their own eyes.

Mussa Ranghar was lying on his couch in the Hari Mandir where the Sikhs used to worship, indulging in cups of wine, and listening to the songsters and seeing their dance. ✓

Seeing this, their indignation and heroic courage were kindled anew. They lost their body consciousness in it. They were carried above themselves into a state when all marvellous deeds can be easily performed. ✓ In the twinkling of an eye, the voluptuous assembly was broken. Mussa Ranghar was massacred on the spot and all his attendants were lying in pools of blood.

Having done this Bhai Matab Singh and Sukha Singh escaped miraculously out of all doors and guards, and rode back to Bikanir and none could have any clue of these daring chiefs of the Sikh brotherhood. (X)

Bhai Matab Singh belonged to the village of Meerankot, whose landlord was *Faqir* Syed Mir Ali. In this village lived a fast friend of Bhai Matab Singh called Natha. The latter was very faithful and truly a friend

While leaving his village for Bikanir Bhai Matab Singh had trusted his little son Rai Singh to the affectionate care of his friend Natha, whom he had charged in the name of friendship to protect and take care of the child.

Now, when the *Ranghars* took the account of the murder of their chief to the Nawab of Lahore and demanded the capture of the culprits with the threat of referring the matter to the Imperial Government at Delhi; on the Nawab's inability to do so the Nawab called in his Hindu detectives and spies notably Naranjini *Mahant* of Jandiala and Rama *Randhawa* and ordered them to find out the clue of the Sikhs who murdered Mussa *Ranghar*. Naranjini reported after a time, that it was none other but Bhai Matab Singh of Meerankot, who could dare do so much as to face the lion in his very den and that his whereabouts being quite unknown, it was beyond his power to assist his capture.

On this report the Nawab sent threatening orders to the Jagirdar of Meerankot and at the same time despatched Nur Din and his sowars to carry out the orders of the capture of Bhai Matab Singh. Nur Din with his army reached Meerankot and demanded from the Jagirdar, the clue to the whereabouts of Bhai Matab Singh, or else the Jagirdar would lose his estate and everything, if he, in any way, seemed to hide the facts and protect the mis-

creants. The Jagirdar made no secret of what he knew. He called his Lumbardar and asked him to produce at once the friend and companion of Bhai Matab Singh, Natha by name, who was residing in Meerankot. Natha was produced before them. He knew nothing about the whereabouts of Bhai Matab Singh and hence he really could not say anything, but Natha was a man who would not say anything even if he knew. Nur Din, having heard about the young son of Bhai Matab Singh, being with Natha, ordered him, to hand over his young ward to the General (Nur Din), as he could not say anything about the whereabouts of Bhai Matab Singh.

Natha went home, where Rai Singh, a boy of seven years, was playing in all innocence, knowing not the approaching calamity at all. Seeing him, Natha was moved. He almost reeled senseless with the evil and the impossible thought of handing that boy over to the tyrants for being butchered for his own personal safety. No, that he won't do. He must not hand over his little trust. He resolved to do all that lay in his power to save the boy. So he resolved to fly away from the village with the boy, even if he were to lose his life in the attempt. Taking this boy on his shoulder and his own brother and nephew along with him, he climbed the village wall and fled away. But as the fate would have it, he was seen while jumping down from

the wall by some one of the party of *Naranjini Mahant* and the news reached the latter in no time. The Mahant took the news to Nur Din, who got up at once from his bed when he was enjoying a sound sleep and began to pursue Natha and the boy of seven, with all his army and after a short time caught him at the distance of about five miles from Merankot.

The reader can well imagine the despair and sudden disappointment of Natha. But he kept his presence of mind.

Seeing the danger, he at once, concealed the boy under a thick bush and proceeded forward to meet the enemy all alone. He made a bold stand. His arrow killed many, but after a short struggle the faithful friend fell doing his utmost to ward off the danger from the head of his dear trust. That little boy was witnessing the dreadful scene, and he could not but scream, cry and come out as he saw his beloved father falling dead before his eyes. To him Natha was almost like a father.

As he came out a few soldiers ran towards him and one of them heartlessly struck the child with his sword. The boy got a serious wound on his back and screaming fell senseless all bathed in blood.



Nur Din thought it to be a grand victory for himself and beating the triumphant march, he made his way back to Lahore. The boy was thought dead, though he had but fainted. After they had gone, a *Kamhoni* woman coming to the spot saw that the boy was alive and she took him home. It is said Rai Singh fully recovered after a time and even at present his descendants are seen in the village named *Bhiri*.

Bhai Matab Singh, by this time had reached Bikanir where he met again his associates and presented the head of Mussa *Ranghar* to the assembly as a trophy.

The Sikh Diwan highly admired the pluck and valour of Bhai Matab Singh and thanks were offered to the great God and the Guru for what they had achieved by this Victory.

After this Bhai Matab Singh with a few adherents began to lead a sort of military life, taking his opportunities to rescue his Sikh brothers or do something to curb the pride of the tyrants. He kept himself in such positions where chances of his detection were few but of his attacks on the enemy were many.

After a year, when he heard of the capture of Bhai Taru Singh Ji and the tortures he suffered, he could no more remain in his exile. He thought of seeing Bhai

Taru Singh once, before his death. Bhai Taru Singh<sup>\*</sup> was his brother, as both had been initiated into the Sikh faith together at the same time. So for the sight of Bhai Taru Singh he would stake all. Life might go but he must see him. Bhai Matab Singh soon reached Lahore.

He went to the place where Bhai Taru Singh was lying in his last moments. Here these two were again united in the utmost love of their faith and their Master. The two great men of the Sikh brotherhood here offered their prayers together. Here they sang their religious hymns together. They lost themselves in the glory of spirit.

After the blessed meeting and the last fare well, Bhai Matab Singh sallied out. No sentinel could stop him, as he flashed his sword and any head that raised itself to bar his way was thrown down by the waving sword of Bhai Matab Singh. But the treacherous Niranjini reported his arrival to the Nawab and got him captured somehow. The Nawab was already hunting after this lion-hearted Sikh and he thanked his stars that after all, the murder of *Mussa Ranghar* would be revenged.

As soon as Bhai Matab Singh was produced before him he proposed to forgive him if he were to accept the

faith of Islam. But heroes seek no forgiveness. Our readers already know the metal of which Sikhs were made. Bhai Matab Singh treated the Nawab and his suggestion with an open scorn and contempt. On this the Nawab, ordered the same tortures to be inflicted on Bhai Matab Singh, which Bhai Subeg Singh and Subaj Singh had suffered before him. Bhai Matab Singh also died while, ejaculating "*Akal, Akal*," "the Deathless one" "the Deathless one" and his soul winged away where Bhai Taru Singh and Bhai Mani Singh and others had gone before him.

Such was the glory of Realisation in the Sikh life.

The End.





# KHALSA AGENCY, AMRITSAR.

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